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BROKEN IDEALS













BROKEN IDEALS.

A *Nobel*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

J. BOWLES DALY, LL.D.

I'm kissing thee, nor weary grow,
And shall I weary? No.
Now, darling maiden, answer me,
What bliss a kiss doth give to thee
Thou lovest it as well as I,
Say wherein does its pleasure lie?
I ask now—asked thee lately—this,
And got for answer kiss on kiss.

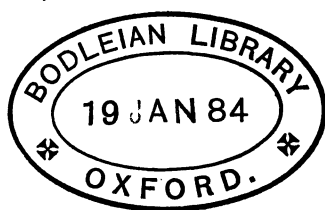
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BROKEN IDEALS.

CHAPTER I.

A HOPELESS LOVE.

There is no love that is not accompanied by madness, unsuitableness, quarrels, peace and war, pleasure and sorrow, danger, grumblings, jealousy, altercations, mistrust, fear, anger, death and ruin.

LUIZ DE CAMOENS. (Translated by Dame Tott.)

Come as you came in the desert,
Ere we were women and men,
When the tiger's passion was in us,
And love as you loved me then.

ANON.

MRS. NUGENT's visits to Park House became more frequent; none of the bashful hesitations which intimidate maidenhood stood in her way. A widow is a woman who is supposed to know "what's what," whatever that occult phrase is meant to convey. Latterly she had assumed airs of authority. The import of all this became plain as daylight

to Lena; indeed the other threw off all disguise, and talked unreservedly of the changes she intended making when she came into office. It was when she posed herself as mistress of the establishment that the girl's temper was roused.

Women have a pertinacity in trifles and an irritating way of insisting on them, which completely baffles masculine comprehension, and renders even a report of such conduct a matter of no small difficulty. The reader will assist the embarrassed author by not asking much detail at his hands in this most painful and delicate of social scenes. Imagine a clever, unscrupulous widow, in a barefaced and two-handed manner peculiar to her kind, entering the home of the man on whom she has set her heart, and of whose house she already esteems herself the prospective mistress, wanting to seize the ribbons before they are legally put into her hands in order to drive the family coach. Imagine the obstructions to this arrangement caused by a grown-up daughter who declines to recognise the rights of her mother's successor, and stoutly

resisting the invader's interference by a discharge of light artillery, which, if not as loud-mouthed as Gatling guns, is not the less effective. The enemy—for it amounts to this—naturally regards the other's existence as a superfluity, which, if expunged or suppressed, would in no wise excite poignant sorrow. One can even go the length of imagining that the act of dispossessing may be considered a duty; the bird is full-grown, and ought to leave. Such is the reasoning, sound and good looked at from one point of view, but not quite so intelligible when seen from the victim's standpoint. It is easy to imagine the difficulties of this situation; a single example will be sufficient.

"I want to drive to Richmond to-day. James tells me he is to go to Bayswater instead. Were you aware of this?" inquired Lena, as she confronted her father before he left for his office.

"Dear me! I forgot to tell you that Mrs. Nugent wanted the carriage," he said, starting.

"Am I, then, always to give place to this

woman?" asked his daughter with flushing cheeks.

"Give place—what—I don't understand," he stammered with confusion.

"Then you have already given her the right to exercise control in the house?"

"Why, Lena, my dear, you know what is to take place soon. It is not much of a favour. Any other day will suit you as well. I had hoped you would get on very well together," he answered, trying to pour oil on the waters with indifferent success.

"If you have thought such a thing there was never a more baseless hope. We never shall get on together," said the girl bitterly, as she listened to his shambling comments.

"Well, my dear, your own marriage will take place soon. You won't be called on to endure anything unpleasant. Believe me, the thought of any misunderstanding between you has caused me some uneasiness."

At the mention of her marriage her cheeks grew pale, and an icy numbness crept through her bones. Fred had not been to

see her for two months; she did not tell her father, and he did not suspect the existence of any break between them. Fred had not answered her letter, but she saw from the papers that he was enjoying himself every day at some reception or party. The remark came like a blow from an invisible hand which made her almost totter.

"My marriage may never take place," she said coldly. "You have been too much engrossed with other matters or you would have noticed what has taken place."

"What has taken place?" he asked, a pained look coming over his face, while his hands trembled as he laid down his gloves. "What has taken place?" he repeated in astonishment.

"Oh! nothing," was the reply.

Even then she shrank from making any complaint.

"To what do you allude, Lena? Do not conceal anything from your father. I may, as you say, have been pre-occupied lately, but I am not unmindful of your interest."

"My interests at present are only im-

perilled by your would-be wife. There is nothing else to report."

Miles breathed hard. Her words relieved him, for the fear of some unknown danger had alarmed him. Latterly he was liable to such shocks.

Lena went to her room, and throwing herself on the bed, wept till she thought her heart would break ; but those merciful tears lightened her sorrow, and she got up afterwards and washed away their effects and sat down to her work as usual. She was, however, quieter and more absorbed. Sometimes she paused several minutes between two stitches, and a sad, desponding expression would steal into her eyes, and she would gaze before her with an unconscious aspect. Then some movement would startle her and make her resume her work hurriedly, while the blood mounted to her brows in a sudden torrent. It is not easy to vivisect a young girl's heart and count out its emotions, but Lena's griefs were not imaginary ; the occurrences already related may have amused the reader, but the reality

banished sleep from the poor girl's eyes and gave her much food for sad reflection. Life was hurrying her over the rough stones and prickly shrubs which bruise so many tender feet, making her shed tears when no one was looking.

It was this feeling of lonesomeness which smote her heart with the greatest terror. She thought her father did not care for her; she grew jealous of his love being given to another, on her own behalf, and doubly so on her mother's account. Was she so soon to be superseded? It was an insult, an outrage. This was what passed through her mind, till her head ached with the melancholy consciousness of something that had happened which her own efforts were powerless to resist.

"This will be no home for you when another takes my place," was a phrase she remembered; the words burned like fire in her brain, and scraped her soul with a passionate grief. The truth of this prophecy became hourly more evident; the time was approaching with giant strides when it would become an undeniable reality.

Elston frequently came to the house and tried to make himself agreeable. His efforts were attended with little success, but at times he made her forget the grief that was preying at her heart. He seldom alluded to Ormsby, and, when his name came up he contrived, while speaking kindly of him, to keep her informed of his movements and the company he kept. There was nothing disparaging in his allusions, still they indirectly conveyed the notion of his unfaithfulness. He ingeniously contrived to stimulate her curiosity without gratifying it. Often she was on the point of asking him plainly to tell her all he knew, but resisted the impulse. No one, perhaps, but herself could tell how much this effort cost her.

“I hear Lady Helena d'Eyncourt is very handsome,” he said one day in a quiet tone. Lena listened breathlessly; she had heard the name, and knew that Fred was acquainted with its owner. “I hear all the men rave about her. I believe the photographers are making a good thing out of her carte. Two R.A.’s are

said to be engaged in painting portraits of her for the Academy."

"What has she done," asked Lena, "that she should excite such interest?"

"Why, I thought you could tell me that," said Elston.

"Why should you think so?" replied the girl, looking at him.

Elston smiled.

"There is no doubt of her beauty at all events," he remarked with evasion.

"You have not answered my question," she said hotly.

Lately Lena had exhibited an impatience of manner which was not habitual with her.

"Has not Fred told you about her?" he inquired, looking down.

"What does he know of her?" she demanded impatiently.

"Everything, I should suppose; but I think you had better not ask me."

For a moment she remained silent, at last she could hold out no longer.

"I should be glad to hear."

"Lena, you know I have no wish to wound your feelings, and, after all, rumour is not to be relied on."

"For heaven's sake speak out and spare me this preamble," she exclaimed with unusual warmth.

"In one word, then, they say he is going to marry her," he said bluntly.

"He—to whom does the pronoun refer?" she asked, while her cheeks grew pale.

He paused for a moment, and looked at her, half afraid of giving the name.

"Ormsby," he said slowly, almost in a whisper.

"'Tis false," she cried, springing up and casting an indignant glance at the speaker. "'Tis a base calumny, and you, his so-called friend, should be the last to repeat it."

"He never esteemed me as his friend," he said quietly, but his cheeks grew pale at her vehemence.

Lena walked towards the window and looked out, she wished to hide her burning face; her heart was beating convulsively. Presently she returned.

"This rumour is false, you have been misinformed."

"Possibly. I have not stated it as a fact."

The tone in which this was said was full of gentleness, she could not detect any pride or triumph in his manner, the existence of which she half suspected.

"I have been quite upset lately," she said, half in apology. "It seems that shortly I shall not have either a home or a friend."

"You will never be without a friend in me, Lena, though you may despise my counsel and trample on me like a dog," he said in a subdued tone, never looking at her.

She listened without heeding his words but the very silence was a concession, which he accepted.

"Believe me, I feel for you, and mourn the change which will shortly take place in this house."

"I believe it," she replied gratefully.

"I have done my utmost to prevent it, but my efforts were powerless."

"Age is no guarantee of wisdom," she answered, referring to her father.

"So it appears ; insanity attacks the wisest. I never saw a man so changed in my life. He is not the genial man I once knew, and such a successor to her who once ruled here—the bare thought cuts me to the heart."

The girl's eyes filled with tears.

"Pray excuse me," she said, rising to leave the room. He held out his hand to her as she passed ; there was a silent pressure, which showed she was grateful ; perhaps he set another meaning on it.

When she reached her room she locked the door, and nothing more was seen of her that night.

When Elston got to his apartments he sat before his solitary fire, and for the first time in his life he could not read, he had a book on his knee, but his thoughts wandered from the open page to the solitary girl in her lonely room, weeping herself to sleep. He drew comfort from this, for he argued—"I am her only sympathiser, she will grow to like me."

The night was cold ; a penetrating wind blew, piercing into every cranny ; the little fire burned cheerfully, throwing patches of

light about the room, the shade on his lamp concealed his face, only the lower part of the room was lit up ; there was something weird and lonely in the slight figure of the man sitting bolt upright on the hard, straight-backed chair, with his rug on his knee, and the open book before him, while his head was thrown back, with his eyes turned toward the ceiling, which was under an eclipse from the green shade, one small spot of light alone being visible ; he was listening to the key-hole storm which raged in mysterious groans now sinking, again raising its voice in that plaintive, melancholy tone which makes us sometimes shudder, as if it were the whispering of lost spirits that came to remind us of their desolation. If alone and unhappy, I would wish my worst enemy no greater punishment than to be compelled to listen to the winds holding melancholy revel, and sending their moaning cries through his key-hole.

Elston was not in the least impressed : his thoughts were happy, for a buried hope had come to life ; he was listening to the piping of the winds with a smile on his lips, one

would have imagined that a ray of light from the fire had kindled and warmed his heart; a soft knock on his door was repeated a second time before he cried—

“Come in.”

The tall figure of a woman, veiled and draped in a loose cloak which entirely concealed her figure, closed the door behind her and stood, without approaching nearer, in silence.

“Who are you?” he asked, not a little startled at this unexpected visit.

She answered by throwing up her veil and revealing the face of Clara Hartman.

Elston stood up, the book fell on the floor.

“What does this mean?” he asked, without advancing towards her.

“Dick, I wanted to see you before I left,” she said falteringly.

“A singular hour you have selected for your interview,” he said coldly.

“What does it matter?” she replied indifferently. “I came to speak to you; we may never meet again. I can’t help doing

what I have done ; can you make no allowance for me ? I felt lonely and wretched."

" You have signed the agreement for going to America ?" he said, not noticing the rest of her words.

" I have, but I am utterly indifferent about myself whether I go or not."

" What do you wish me to say ?" he asked, greatly perplexed.

" Have I lost all interest in your eyes that you should put such a question ?" she asked in a plaintive tone.

He remained silent ; he found it hard to express the truth, perhaps a man never stood in a more painful situation.

" You will never regret granting it, Dick," she continued, " it is an unmaidenly request, but why should conventionality seal my lips if my heart prompts the utterance ? Is it right that a woman's heart should break in silence when God has given her the power of utterance ? You know I love you ; you say I have talent and good looks, and the cheers and applause of thousands have endorsed your words ; that talent, which I know you

value, will be entirely devoted to your service. I will be everything to you a woman can be, wife, friend, companion, such as no other woman ever could be. I will serve you with heart and brain and love and life. Dick, take me to your heart, save me from myself." Her voice sank into a whisper as she uttered the last words, while her hand sought the chair for support.

It was some time before he spoke, his voice was husky but grew assured as he went on.

"It can't be, Clara. I have long since considered the matter; not now, perhaps, while you are excited, but by-and-bye you will admit that I am right. I can't accept the offer you make, much as I value you; you have tasted the admiration of thousands—admiration which you richly deserve—you would never be content with the homage of one man; perhaps it is the curse of my nature, but I am consumed with jealousy. I could never bear to have my wife stared at by the silly fools who hang within and without the wings of a theatre. The thing is impossible," he said firmly.

"I am willing to give up the stage," she said with an effort.

"You would pine for it again and blame me for making such an unreasonable demand. No, Clara, banish the thought, let us be friends but no longer lovers," and he held out his hand.

She gave him one piercing look of indignant scorn, dropped her veil, and turned to the door.

"My life was spoiled from the first, but you have ruined it," she murmured bitterly, and then left him standing on the hearthrug, astounded and hardly aware that the scene was a reality, the whole thing seemed to have taken place so quickly.

He heard the door close behind her, and a cold rush of wind came up the stairs and chilled him. His first impulse was to take his hat and follow her into the street, but this idea he abandoned.

"What would be the use?" he thought, returning to the fire; it had fallen down, the red embers looked dull and sulky. Just

then the wind howled round the house, he thought he heard a woman's voice cry in the storm, which made his heart leap, then all was silent for a minute, and nothing but the faint whispering cry in the keyhole came to him.

Elston did not spend a pleasant night, for do what he would he could not recover the state of hopefulness which his visitor had dispelled.

He went to bed, drew the lamp close to him, and turned to "Rousseau's Confessions," that much abused work, full of such strange pathetic thoughts, stained with the vices of the author, but rich in honest revelations of the heart. It procured him peace and finally helped to usher him into that strange world that lies so close to all of us, and to which modern philosophers have not as yet supplied the key.

CHAPTER II.

'AN AWKWARD ENCOUNTER.

Nobody is much to be envied, innumerable people are much to be pitied. The world is hell, and human beings are, on the one hand, spirits in torment, and, on the other, devils.

W. H. S.

ENDURANCE in the masculine mind shows itself in a bold front, steady action, and a certain fortitude which has no particular name : the same quality in a woman takes the form of resignation and a tendency to repine. Lena's condition partook largely of the latter. Elston within the last few weeks had acquired a certain influence over her. No, not what you think, or what he thought, for that matter if anyone else chose to deceive themselves so much the worse for them ; his influence only amounted to this : the girl talked to him of her suffering because he was already acquainted with what was going on between her father and the widow ; that which passed in her own heart she never confided to him or anyone else ; if he guessed what

went on there and placed his own construction on it could anyone, least of all this injured girl, prevent it? He placed his time and sympathy at her disposal, and she accepted the services of this friend. She did not know that Mrs. Nugent was privately advising Elston to renew his addresses, and affording him considerable encouragement with the view of getting the girl out of her way. That lady was not a step-mother yet, but to all intents and purposes she felt herself in that position; her temperament had grown sanguine, and she sometimes anticipated matters when the slow progress of affairs wearied her.

Lena was induced occasionally to walk out with Elston; her cheeks were growing pale, his solicitude for her health touched her. She could not refuse him this favour. In one of their walks she encountered Fred sitting beside Lady Helena in a carriage. Elston lifted his hat, Lena's face flushed and her heart beat, she could hear its throb. Her last meeting with Fred was unpleasant even in memory. He had charged her

with coldness and an absence of interest in his affairs. She uttered no reproach but met him with indignant silence. She was sorry for it when he left, for she thought she had done wrong. The next visit would put all straight, but he did not come. She wrote, but no answer reached her. This was how matters stood between them.

"Why did you lift your hat?" was the only word she exchanged with her companion for some minutes after the occurrence.

"He was looking towards me, I could not be rude."

Elston had done it on purpose. He wanted to let Ormsby see that she could give him up; he went further, for as Fred was going to his Club that night he put himself in his way. There was no friendly greeting between them, each cordially disliked the other.

"So you walk out with Miss Cavendish," said Fred, his throat parching at the mention of her name.

"Yes, I saw you and the belle of the season drive past. We often walk together now. I hope you won't spoil sport this time."

"Did she see me?" he asked, not noticing the other's request.

Elston's words bit his soul like aqua fortis when it touches a piece of base metal.

"She saw you and has heard the rumours of your marriage; you both have our good wishes."

Fred turned on his heel, his hands itched to take the other by the collar and fling him in the gutter, but urgent as this desire was, wisdom suggested its postponement till some better pretext for doing so would present itself.

"Damn him," cursed Fred under his teeth, "if it were anyone else I could bear it better."

"Ah, we are waiting for you!" exclaimed a slight young man as soon as he saw Fred. There was a group standing in the hall of the Club reading a telegram which had come in about a horse that was scratched.

"We are all in the same boat, Ormsby," said Sir George, growing pale as he heard the news. "I am sorry I didn't hedge. Tryon says he has not lost much, he is

always in luck. Egad, this is a cropper. I wonder when the luck will turn, you see the tide can't always be going out, that's how I argue."

"You are not the heaviest loser this time, I can tell you."

"Ha! I'm sorry; were you in for much?"

"Yes, a big sum; but there is no use crying over spilt milk. Come let us have a rubber and forget it."

Fred's pace had been faster than any of his friends imagined; the mountain of bills and letters that had accumulated on his breakfast table was enough to oppress the heart of any man, yet he came down singing a snatch of a song, dressed in the most accurate costume, and trying to maintain as happy a front as if there was not such a thing as a piece of stamped paper in all London.

There was one missive among this morning's heap which, however, caught his eye. His cheeks blanched as he tore it open. It contained a ring in a sheet of paper, not a word of writing accompanying it. He coolly put the

ring into his waistcoat pocket and threw the envelope on the fire, and then watched it blaze and curl and vanish in a black scroll up the chimney.

“I see the fellow was right. Why should I have doubted his words? But by Jove I did. I could not have believed it; she sends me the ring I gave her without a word of comment. Very well, Lena, I’ll make it do double duty. How will you like that, young lady?”

He was trying to make out to himself that he was the aggrieved party, but sophistry could not go so far. “She took no interest in my new career, laughed at my going into the House, repelled me with silence,” he muttered.

He went to the table, filled himself a glass of brandy and tossed it off; his hand shook as he held the decanter. Then he walked up and down the room; at last his better feelings urged the confession—

“I am a brute, and I deserve it; she is a noble girl, I was not worthy of her.”

When a man is alone he is generally honest,

there is no temptation to act a part, and even a bad man is not disposed to flatter himself; it is only when others enter that he resumes his mask and struts about deceiving or thinking that he deceives them, but not so himself. This kind of solitude is not a pleasant thing. Fred could not endure it, so he left the house.

At the Albert Gate he met Lord Tryon who was driving a splendid pair of high-stepping horses in his mail-phaeton; Fred got up beside him.

"Where shall I put you down?" asked that nobleman, after they had discoursed for some length about horses.

"At Lady Frostlake's," was the reply.

"Very well, I am driving in that direction, so I shall not be going out of my way. By the way, Fred"—the young man paused and looked at his companion with some hesitation, "I hope you will excuse me, I am too young to be your mentor, but you won't, my dear fellow, mind my saying 'Take care of that house.'"

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Fred,

starting; he had not been listening to a word the other said. Other times and other days had just then caught his mind in their grip, he was thinking of the days when he had walked this patrician thoroughfare looking wistfully at a similar equipage to that he was seated in, how he envied them, now he almost wished that time was back again. He only caught the last words, "Take care of that house."

"What house do you mean?"

Lord Tryon coughed, and seemed to have some difficulty in getting out his words.

"We were talking of Lady Frostlake's," he explained, "and I was just giving you a sort of friendly warning. I know you would give me the 'straight tip' were you placed in my position." The young lord said this with some hesitation.

"Why, your mother visits there," put in Fred, astonished.

"It is just because of my mother I have alluded to it; you know what a friend she is to you."

"The Countess is the best of women; her-

friendship is an honour and a boon to me," replied Fred earnestly.

"Precisely; now I want to tell you that you will most assuredly forfeit her good opinion by going there. I am already warned off; so you see how the land lies."

"That's just what I don't see. Tryon, you must speak out. I must know more," persisted Fred.

"A nice thing it may turn out if you happen to repeat my words; but you must pledge your honour to secrecy, else I'll not open my lips."

"Certainly; you have my deepest assurance. Can you doubt me?"

"I hate talking of these things, but of course now you must hear it. They say the play at Lady Frostlake's is very high. Tom Swinton has been cleaned out there. My mother has forbidden me the house. There, now you know all."

"Why, she is deeply in my debt!" exclaimed Fred, while something heavy seemed to have fallen on his heart, crushing it to his side.

"Don't lend her any more, for not a penny of what you have given will you ever see again—that I am certain of," exclaimed the nobleman confidently.

"I have not even an acknowledgment," groaned the young man, who now began to feel that the devil himself must have got him into his clutches.

"I am deuced sorry to hear that," said Lord Tryon, nervously flicking a fly off the harness.

"I know that, Tryon; but it is not your fault."

"Yes, it is," persisted the young man, "and I feel it too. Didn't I introduce you? What will my mother say? She thinks I have been leading you astray," complained Lord Tryon childishly.

"I, on the contrary, assured her that none of my misdemeanours would lie at your door. What nonsense to think so."

"I am glad you did, Fred, for she does not half believe me. I must, however, take some of the blame on myself; you would not have known her but for me. I am cut up at her having fleeced you."

"I must make a humiliating confession by admitting that I have lent her several large sums without any legal acknowledgment. I have also done bills for the Earl of D'Eyncourt, through her, to a large amount. I thought her word was to be relied on."

"Not it; the next thing you will hear is that she is abroad nobody knows where."

"Not before I have some explanation with her; you need not fear, your name shall not come out. Put me down here. I can walk the rest of the way. Many thanks," and he waved his hand.

"It is all up with him," muttered the nobleman as he touched his horses, feeling not a little proud of the many pairs of eyes which looked appreciatively at the cattle as they champed the bit, impatiently tossing their handsome heads as if they were conscious of being admired.

Two hours later Fred was returning through the Park, his hat was drawn down over his eyes; his brows contracted—popular indications of a disturbed state of mind. He had every reason for anxiety. Lord Tryon had told only the bare truth, Lady Frostlake was

unable to pay her debts ; indeed, she laughed at the notion of attempting to do so, but I am not going into that matter.

Fred came to a sudden pause ; a lady was standing before him—her eyes were fixed on him—it was that made him stop.

“Lena!” he exclaimed in confusion, for it was no other.

She made an effort as if she would pass on, but his voice had a certain magnetic influence over her which entirely frustrated the impulse.

“I got the ring without one word ; you might at least have told me, but I know I have no right to ask.”

“You have forfeited the right to ask,” she answered coldly. “Why stop me for idle questions?”

“God knows, I don’t. The world has deceived me ; I sometimes do not know what I am doing,” he replied in a strange voice.

“You know what you are doing when you drive out with Lady Helena D’Eyncourt. That at least does not appear an involuntary action.”

"I suppose not," he said quietly.

That reply almost broke her heart—he admitted what rumour had circulated—she felt something rise in her throat; for a moment she was incapable of reply. He did not know what was passing in her mind, he only saw her standing coolly before him, perhaps like the rest of the world pitying or despising him.

"Good-bye," was all she could say; she afterwards wondered how she had been able to control her feelings, the shock of his unrepented desertion depriving her of all further utterance; a strange numbness, a melancholy torpor came over her, her movements became mechanical.

"Good-bye," he murmured as he strode forward, making no further attempt to detain her. He did not look behind him; if he had he would have seen the girl still standing in the same place, her head averted, her eyes cast down; she felt as if she had received a severe shock which had had the effect of suddenly suspending all sensation. Luckily there was a seat at hand; there was nobody passing.

Lena had the satisfaction of being allowed to shed hot burning tears all to herself.

"Can this be the end!" she cried. "Can this be the end!" The words swept like a hot wind through her brain, scorching up every other emotion. If she had seen the stars fall down from the open heavens, like the leaves in October, she could not have been more surprised. She never remembered how she got home; and the days that followed were haunted by the one idea that never left her mind. As she went about the house she seemed to be perpetually saying to herself, "And this is the end."

Elston noticed her pre-occupation, but he put it down to the father's marriage which was to take place in a few days. Nor did it escape her father's notice, but he attributed it to the same cause, and grew uneasy and wished it was over.

"Maria, my dear, you are taking a broken man who has lost heart in life," he murmured the day before the ceremony, when he called to arrange about some of her boxes. They were to go to the Isle of Wight. The marriage

was to be quite private; and they were to drive from the church door to the Railway Station. To this the widow submitted, though she set store on a grand ceremony.

"It will be my business and pleasure to cheer you for the rest of your life. See if I don't do it," she said cheerfully.

"If you don't, no one ever can," answered the old man, simply.

"Why not? You are my ideal of devotion and fidelity," the widow exclaimed with fervour.

"Don't expect too much, Maria," piteously pleaded the old man, as the thought of his dead wife rose up before him.

"Never mind, dear; we must both bury the past. I have never had any real happiness, but I think there is some before me now. Let us from this time forward look at the bright side of things."

Miles smiled feebly, and squeezed her hand. If he had been younger he would have taken her in his arms and kissed her. Perhaps this was what she expected, but he didn't.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD CHURCH AT D'EYNCOURT.

Down it comes silently,
Slowly, and soft,
Whitening the cottage roof,
Garden and croft
Whiter than lilies that
Brood on a stream,
Comes the strange mystery—
Is it a dream?

MORTIMER COLLINS.

LENA looked at her watch. "They have left the church by this," she said, casting a dreary, tired look all round her. The events of the last few days had deranged her nerves; when she thought of her lover's inconstancy, it was like the low murmuring of the sea at her heart; she several times put her hands to her head as if her senses were leaving her, and could not sit still. She went up to her mother's room, which was shortly to be fitted up in quite a different style. The statue was removed but the couch still stood by the window. She went over and knelt down beside it as she had often done in days

gone by. She missed the hand that used to be laid lovingly on her head, and now hid her face on the pillow to shut out from her eyes the vacancy caused by the loved one's absence. The fountains of her heart were again opened, and when she lifted her tear-stained, lovely eyes to heaven the pillow was wet. In a broken voice she asked her Father in Heaven to pity and not desert her as her earthly friends had done. She then prayed, too, for those who wronged her, without mentioning their names—that she could not do, all the time she thought her mother was standing beside the Throne approving of the petition, and advocating its acceptance. There was something pathetic in the figure of the lonely girl by the vacant couch. When she arose she felt refreshed and invigorated.

Miles and Mrs. Cavendish were then speeding as fast as the express could take them out of London on their honeymoon trip.

It was a wearisome day to Lena, but at last her preparations were complete. She had long since determined to quit her father's house when her mother's place became filled;

and now the time to go had arrived. No third person should be a spectator or hindrance to their happiness. Much as Lena loved her father, this last act of his raised a barrier which had severed the connection between them; and her interview with Fred rendered the plan more easy of execution. What she now had to live for was not apparent, and, if live she must, better be away from a step-mother whose presence she detested.

She had often heard that work was the elixir of life, the only thing to stay the feverish hunger of unsatisfactory desires. Inaction she felt would be death to her, so her mind was made up. Everything had changed, better that she should change with it.

Lena now waited but for an opportunity to get her trunk removed, and already longed to quit the place.

It was not an easy matter to leave her father's house without exciting the suspicions of the servants, but she did so in the only way possible—by ringing the bell and ordering her servant to get her trunk removed to the hall, and to call a cab. The servant,

a new importation recommended by Mrs. Nugent, obeyed, seeing nothing unusual in the order, as there was no concealment in her actions. "Tell him to drive to the Euston Station," she said, as she dropped her veil before entering the vehicle.

The next moment she had left her father's house, not to return to it. The noisy rattle of the loose window panes, as the lumbering growler rattled over the hard pavement, drowned the few broken sobs which this parting tore from her.

Elston called that evening, and was astounded at her sudden departure. The closest examination of the servant could only elicit the fact that she drove to the Euston Station; she had left neither message nor letter, and told no one where she was going. The young man went away bitterly disappointed, more so because during the last few weeks he was beginning to think that matters were progressing favourably, and this evening, when he expected to find her alone, he had made up his mind to press his suit, after reminding her of her lonely position and his

life-long devotion. He really felt that everything was in his favour, and that this time, if not accepted entirely for love, she might take him to show her spite for Fred and as a means of removing herself from her step-mother's presence, which he well knew was hateful to her. But this was not to be. Elston was compelled to walk away, making the most of the information. That she had deserted her home at first never crossed his mind. His vanity was wounded by this conduct, and the slender consolation that remained to him was that she would write, perhaps next day, and tell him where she had gone.

Misfortunes, like successes, move in battalions. Fred for the last few weeks—dating from that visit to Lady Frostlake's, and the unexpected interview with Lena—had been suffering all the tortures of remorse for his infidelity to old friends and trustfulness to the new ones. His face now, like that of Hezekiah, was turned to the wall, and he knew that ruin stared him in the face. "Good God! I only wanted this to complete

my misery," he exclaimed, flinging down a letter the servant had just put in his hand. The note which had occasioned those words had come from his old tutor, who was in ignorance of his recent actions. It asked him if the day for his marriage was yet fixed, and contained encomiums on Lena which were expected to be gratifying to a lover's ears. Fred paced the room impatiently.

"How easily she gave me up," he thought, referring to Lena; then he muttered, "No man should ever trust a woman;" and the next inconsistent notion, "How I love her." This was when the splendid proportions of the dark-eyed beauty rose before him, sumptuous as Cleopatra, and as maddening to his senses as that lady proved to the trusting Anthony. For a while the thought of her effaced every other remembrance, causing his blood to quicken through his veins. He then went to his dressing room, gave some finishing touches to his costume, and left the house. In the street he hailed a cab. His cheeks were paler than usual and his eyes somewhat

sunken, but it detracted in nowise from his distinguished appearance. He had on a heavy overcoat with a fur collar, which became him. He drove to Paddington. There had been a heavy fall of snow the night before; the crossing-sweepers were clearing the slush off the pathway.

Turning a street corner, a flower girl invited custom in a piteous voice. She was so intent on business that she did not perceive the approach of the cab till the wheel came in contact with her hip, causing her to fall with a groan on the slippery stones. In a minute Fred had jumped out and lifted the fallen girl, whose leg was broken at the ankle. A crowd had collected. A policeman took the cabman's number. Fred took out his card case, giving the constable his name, and telling him to let him know where she was taken. The man touched his hat, for Fred had put something into his hand as he left.

This incident pained Fred as he proceeded to the station; it was an omen of ill-luck, and the woebegone face of the poor girl haunted him. But he had other matters to

think about, as the train dashed into the open country, leaving the slush, and the crowd, and the slippery streets behind.

There were patches of blue among the leaden clouds overhead, and the pure white snow lay in large heaps on the fields as he passed by; all the ditches seemed full of water, and the hard outlines and blackened stumps of trees shot back as the train flew past. At a quiet little station he alighted; then he procured a fly, and in half-an-hour he was driving up a long avenue amidst leafless trees towards a large house, where the windows shone with a crimson light from the evening sun. A little grey church with a square tower stood back beside the house, and the door was open; a large heap of holly with scarlet berries was piled in the porch. Fred alighted, and told the man to go round to the court-yard and wait. He then turned his steps towards the church. Just then a streak of silvery gold appeared in the west, shining with metallic distinctness on a narrow strip of background formed of chrysolite green. The rest of the heavens

was covered with masses of blue-black clouds that fell over the golden sheen, hastening along like pilgrims hurrying on their journey, the distant bright light shining distinctly through the legs of the pilgrims. It was a pretty sight, but Fred did not stop to notice the effect; he was vaguely conscious of its presence as he entered the church.

Near the chancel Lady Helena stood, holding some copper wire in her hand which she was using for wreaths. She wore a tight-fitting black dress of some rich material—eel skin could not have clung more closely to her finely-moulded figure—with a silver collarette round her neck, and white linen cuffs that set off her shapely hands. Her face was half averted as Fred stood surveying her from the distance. "Glory to God in the highest" was done in jeweller's wadding, the letters standing out like snow-flakes. She was standing before the altar, intent on her work; her assistant had just left. Fred approached with bared head. Lady Helena looked up, in no way surprised. She was one of those

women who are never taken by surprise, or if that emotion came near her, it did not take the usual form.

"Don't you think the wreath pretty?" she asked, after he had greeted her.

"Exquisite," he replied nervously, her calmness adding to his hesitation.

"Lady Helena, I have come down to say something particular to you. It is not out of place to make my confession in this building," he said, looking at her. She made no sign of assisting him, but laid down the scissors which she had taken up. She looked perfectly self-possessed. "Can you guess what it is?" he added.

She shook her head, and stood as immovable as a statue. Fred wished to hurry the matter. He had no doubt in his mind as to the reception his words would receive, yet he could not divest his mind of the recollection that he was addressing the daughter of a peer.

"Helena, I love you. If I have been too hasty in making this avowal, I'll give you all the years of my life, and all the devotion I

can throw into them, to make up for it. Tell me, will you be my wife ?”

He caught the hand which hung gracefully by her side, and she made no resistance ; the colour brightened on her cheek, but she did not say a word.

He took a ring from his pocket, and after stooping and printing a kiss on the cold hand he held in his, proceeded to put it on her finger. He paused as if a thought occurred to him before doing so. “ Your acceptance and the confidence it reposes in me prompts me to make one confession.”

“ What is it ?” she asked, without withdrawing her hand.

“ Well, dearest, you have heard that I am rich ?”

She bowed her head in assent.

“ Now suppose I told you I was not, would that make any difference ? I wish to know if I have entirely won your heart. There are some women—those who often love the deepest—who are not much given to words. Helena, I always looked on you as one of these. Now what answer do you give ?”

"But it is not true," she said, her dark eyes searching his face. "You are wealthy; everyone says so."

"Suppose everyone was wrong, what would be your reply?"

"I don't like this form of inquiry," she answered, endeavouring to withdraw her hand.

Fred held it fast in his.

"Won't you indulge me, dearest?" he entreated, while his voice grew soft.

"You want to try me; I don't think it fair," she remonstrated, with averted eyes; there was something sullen in their expression. All the time he was taking this silence as a proof of her modesty. It would have been easy to give an answer which would gratify him, but her maidenly reserve held her back. What more did he need?

"Helena, I trust you with my life and my happiness. What I have supposed is but too true. I may have a thousand or two a year to live on, but that will not make any difference to you;" and as he spoke he slipped the ring on her finger. The next moment

she snatched her hand from him and drew back. The ring fell and rolled away on the smooth tiles. A sudden glistening of gold from the dying sun lit up the chancel, showing the face of the girl crimson with indignation.

"A thousand or two a year to live on," she reiterated, scornfully surveying him, "how dare you insult me?"

Fred drew back, he almost tottered, the shock came so unexpectedly.

"Can I believe my eyes?" he gasped, looking at her.

"Take your ring and yourself away," she cried; "you are an impostor. Do you think I would marry a beggar? I, the daughter of an earl, and you a commoner. Nothing but poverty would make me stoop so low?" she cried, as she swept by him down the aisle, flinging a look at him as she passed, which conveyed a volume of contempt and baffled pride, that literally took away his breath.

He stood in the same position for several minutes, unable to realise the scene he had just gone through.

His eyes fell on the shining bit of gold which thus came back to him the second time. He walked towards it, and ground it with his heel; this action, meritorious or otherwise, supplied a measure of satisfaction which enabled him to leave the church in a dignified, if not in a reverential condition, and the cool wind which blew in his face at the door revived him. He woke as one from a trance, exclaiming—"Good God, this is the dream I had in Brighton, the very night I gave Lena the same ring." He turned and looked at the chancel, the face of the indignant girl rose before him—"the same," he groaned, while a cold pang shot through his limbs. He fled from the place as if it had been haunted.

CHAPTER IV.

REMORSE.

"Yon cloud with that long purple cleft
Brings fresh into my mind
A day like this which I have left
Full thirty years behind."

OLD SONG.

"The pain of ungratified wishes is small compared to that of remorse; for the former confronts the ever open unbounded future, the latter the irrevocably closed past."

SCHOPENHAUER.

For a week Elston waited patiently; then as no letter arrived, he grew anxious and perplexed; every day he called at the house, the servants could tell him nothing. Vague apprehensions filled his mind. He would have written to her father, but he did not know his address; that the Isle of Wight was his destination he had already understood, but where there he did not know. He called at Mr. Cavendish's office in the City, hoping that he might have left some instructions whereto find him in case any matter of importance occurred which would require his opinion; but the clerk said Mr. Cavendish left none. He

had mentioned that he would be away for three or four weeks, nothing more. Elston wrote two letters addressed to the principal hotels in Shanklin and Ventnor, and they were returned. Never did time appear so long, each week was an eternity; there was nothing for it but to wait; in the meantime his mind became the prey of anxious thoughts. It was Friday evening in the fourth week when Elston called—the sight of the trunks in the hall told him that they had come at last. He met Mrs. Cavendish as he walked into the drawing-room.

“What is all this commotion?” she asked. “This girl will, I see, be a perfect nuisance to me. There is Mr. Cavendish going about like a madman. Is this your doing?”

Her face was flushed; there had evidently been a scene.

“I think you are not likely to be trouble with her any more,” he replied curtly.

“Is that you, Elston?” called out Miles, hearing the voices in the hall. “Come in directly.”

Miles was looking over a heap of letters

which had accumulated in his absence. He looked very much aged. He had not opened one of them, he was only looking at the superscriptions, none bore his daughter's handwriting.

"What do you make out of this?" he asked anxiously, pointing to a chair. Elston removed his hat and sat down.

"I can't understand it; she left the day you went away, and nothing has been seen or heard of her since."

"Oh, my God!" groaned the father, his hand falling heavily to his side.

"You had better open all the letters. They may contain some reference."

Miles took up one in his hand, which shook as he broke the seal.

"I can't read it," he said, "the words all swim before me."

Elston at once came to his side, relieving him of the task which seemed too much for the perplexed father. All to no purpose, the letters contained no reference to the missing girl; one, indeed, was from her aunt in the north asking her on a visit.

"I'll go out and send her a telegram," said Elston, breaking the silence. "She may have gone there anticipating the invitation." In his heart he believed that this was a useless effort, but it was the only chance left.

"Tell me, Dick, before you go, what are your suspicions?" cried the old man, turning towards him.

"I have been completely baffled for weeks past. I have been turning it over in my mind; if she is not with her aunt I can suggest nothing."

"Why didn't you write to me?" he asked reproachfully.

"I sent two letters to the Isle of Wight; but they were returned," replied the young man calmly.

"We went to Hastings, my wife changed her mind," said Miles in anguish.

"I had better go and wire that message; I'll be back directly," and Elston took up his hat and left the room.

The old man sat with his face buried in his hands, the grey hairs hanging over his fingers; he breathed heavily as if in pain.

Mrs. Cavendish did not enter the room; there was a great deal of whispering going on in the kitchen.

"I'll give notice," said the parlour-maid; "what do you think? she flew at me because I had not removed the poor mistress' chair out of the morning-room. I would not put up with that from her betters," she continued with a toss of the head.

"The poor master is looking rare bad, that's what I see," said the butler, lifting his heavy eyebrows.

"Serves him right," said the cook, "he had a daughter to look after his house. Why wasn't he satisfied? He has one now that will tame him. I don't think I'll stay here long." The cook was the oracle of the kitchen, and all took their tone from her.

A ring at the bell put a stop to this conversation.

"That's Mr. Elston," said the butler retreating.

Elston, having sent the telegram, had returned; he saw how depressed the old man was.

"You must not be despondent till we have done our utmost."

"What more have we to do?" he said quickly.

Elston became silent.

"Tell me, Dick, do you think she is dead?" enquired the father in a hollow voice.

"God forbid!" exclaimed the young man starting; it was what he had been thinking of for the last week, and there was not a paper he took up that he did not first look for the casualties.

"Dick, don't deceive me; you have thought of this too," murmured the father sorrowfully. "I see it in your change of colour."

"I have thought of several things," said Elston evasively.

"Oh, my poor child!" Mr. Cavendish exclaimed piteously. Then he started suddenly as if a thought had struck him.

"Has Fred been here lately?"

"Not that I have heard. I believe they have quarrelled."

"Worse and worse," groaned the father. Mrs. Cavendish here entered the room.

"Well, what conclusion have you come to?" she enquired. Elston told her he had sent the telegram.

"She has not gone there. My impression is that Fred is at the bottom of this."

"Did you know, my dear, that they had fallen out?" enquired Miles, tenderly.

"No; but I should not be surprised; what was it?"

"I did not hear the particulars, but it happened before you left," said Elston.

"Depend upon it, Ormsby can tell where she is if anyone can. It was shameful the way he treated her; they say he is going to be married to Lady Helena D'Eyncourt. If the girl saw the paragraph that appeared in the papers about them, it must have quite upset her mind."

"You suspected this some time back, Maria?" said Miles, remembering a former conversation.

"I never had any confidence in him; I believe the fortune turned his head. If my advice had been taken, the marriage would have taken place long ago. You remember dear, I said as much."

Miles nodded his head, but the recollection of her wisdom in no way lightened his present suffering.

Elston gave her a look of contempt, but said nothing. He never had had much faith in her support, and like many others proved himself utterly ungrateful for the assistance she had given him.

Here a telegram was brought in, it contained no news. Lena had not gone to her aunt's, neither could she give any information about her.

When this was read the three gazed at each other in silence, Mrs. Cavendish arranged a fold of her dress placidly, the old man stared straight before him, Elston grew tired of this enforced silence, and longed to go away, for there was nothing further to be done.

Mrs. Cavendish felt this a dreary day, not that her mind shared any of the anxieties which weighed upon her husband's ; she did not care if Lena never turned up, but she saw her husband was overcome, and it is not possible, no matter what one's personal feelings may be, to be happy when you see those

around you oppressed with care. Lena present was bad enough, but now that she was absent—absent, too, in such a mysterious and unaccountable manner—was even worse.

“This comes of marrying a widower,” she thought; “what troubles we poor women are exposed to.”

She thought this more than once as she noticed the dejected, sorrowful face of her husband, who hardly spoke to her the whole evening. The snug little house in Bayswater came up before her, upbraiding her for deserting it. The castle which contains our life is like an old Norman keep, with many a loophole and cranny where the winds of care can be blown in; there is no such thing as perfect safety. Mrs. Cavendish had accomplished her desires, she was mistress now, where she was once only a tolerated visitor; she looked round the splendid apartment, but felt chilled and lonely, it gave her little pleasure. She sighed pathetically; possession is the bane of everything.

“I wonder where Clara is?” she thought. “I think I can now defy her,” and she gave

a soft little laugh of triumph as she thought how skilfully she had played her cards.

Miles walked up and down his lonely study, silently brooding over his misfortunes ; his mind was torn with contending emotion, biting salt on a bleeding soul ; his child was lost to him, perhaps dead ; his first wife's face rose before him, mute but reproachful, his second stood outside his heart's affliction. She could not understand his grief, she could not sympathise with him ; the cold wind moaning through the leafless trees, wailed through his soul, and the heavy pattering of the rain on the window seemed to be sobbing in reproach at his conduct.

“ What have I done,” he asked, “ that my house should be left to me desolate ? ” and then he bowed down his head, and the silent tears coursed down the hollow cheeks, seamed with the shallow cares of sixty years. Angry gusts of wind and fresh torrents of rain seemed to bear the answer to his soul. Too well he knew what he had done, too well he knew that his sin had found him out, and he gasped as if something was choking him,

and then pushed back the grey hairs which fell over his eyes; hairs which he had dishonoured. Where was now the sunset glow as he descended the valley? Where were the bright smiles and the loving looks that once greeted him? Cold and dreary and stormy his future would be, as the night which spoke to him. Why did the prattling voice of the child which he so well remembered, ring out to him? Was God now scourging him for his brutal conduct to his dead wife, who may have heard the whisper of his falsehood before she left the world? Was the child now gone to confirm the mother's doubts, and was God with His angels lashing the storm to remind him of his guilt? The old man lifted his hands to his burning forehead and knelt down, imploring forgiveness. The wind whistled more wildly, a deafening crash of thunder pierced the air.

"May God defend me from the worst of all maladies!" he cried, fearing that his reason was going. The air became suffocating when he rose, a sudden thought flashed through his brain as he sought the door. The next

moment he was walking madly through the empty streets, the burden of his heart was concentrated in the two words which he repeated constantly, "My child, my child, my child!"

In his splendid apartments in Curzon Street, the walls decorated with costly pictures, knick-knacks of priceless value on the tables and niches on the wall, sat Ormsby, Sir George Cartridge and Lord Tryon were his companions. They were sitting beside a blazing fire, a small card-table stood between them, the light in the next room was lowered giving a subdued air of repose to the scene, the remains of a supper were on the table, the wine in the decanters shone in flashes of red and gold. The party was for the most part silent except when an occasional card was flung on the table which decided the game; but the bated breath and the hungry eyes which were turned on the green cloth showed that the true gambler's spirit was here. There was a hellish desperation in the looks which were exchanged as the piles of gold were

pushed from one side to the other. The storm of the elements raged outside, but the internal warfare that surged in the breasts of those three was fiercer still. The play was very high, and the consequent emotion terrible. Fred was winning, his cheeks were flushed, and his eyes had an unusual brilliancy in their glitter. As the game came to a conclusion Lord Tryon stood up.

"I'll play no more," he said in an hesitating tone; his face was as white as marble, and he shook as he quaffed a huge bumper of champagne.

"Double or quits," shouted Sir George, who still clung to the table with a desperate anxiety to retrieve his losses.

Ormsby seemed about to yield when Lord Tryon screamed—

"Fred, you are mad, don't take it."

"Oh, if you are afraid I'll not press," said the other, shuffling the cards.

"I am not afraid. Here goes," said Fred, goaded by this remark.

The nobleman stood breathlessly looking at the game that now stood between the two. It was a moment of terrible suspense.

"By heavens he has lost," said Tryon, turning away as the pile of gold was transferred to Sir George's side. Fred sat transfixed, while his cheeks grew ashy pale. He watched the other sweep the gold off the table.

There were footsteps on the landing, and the next moment the door was flung open, and Cavendish, with his dripping clothes and wild, death-like face, confronted the company.

Lord Tryon stared at the intruder with a startled expression of face, he saw something serious was impending. Sir George had his back turned towards the door. Fred sat still gazing on the man in speechless astonishment. Tryon thought he was struck dumb.

Cavendish approached the table with his eyes fixed on Fred.

"Where is my daughter?" he asked in a hoarse, choking voice. There was the calmness of desperation written on his face. Fred was too overcome to speak.

The silence that followed was too terrible to depict in words.

"There is the man who has robbed me of

my child," said the frantic father, turning to the two men who stood mute, conscious of some impending revelation.

"By heavens it is false," screamed Fred, starting to his feet.

"You are a liar," shouted Miles. "Before your companions I stamp you as a villain and a scoundrel!"

"Sir—your age—your passion"—Ormsby stammered, unable to find words. With difficulty he continued, "Before God and these gentlemen I say I am innocent of the charge you have flung at me. I know nothing of your daughter. Do you believe me?"

"No; a hundred times no, your guilty looks confirm my suspicion. Tell me where is your victim, and I leave you, and shall not expose your guilt; tell me, her father, where she is and I will pardon the insult you have flung on me, and the dishonour you have brought on my house."

The old man's eyes flashed with a wild excitement as he uttered these words.

"The man is mad," said Sir George, touching the bell.

"Sir, I have suffered enough to make me so, but my reason still remains to tell me how blindly I have trusted that man's honour, and now how bitterly I have to regret the trust."

All this time Fred stood with folded arms, he offered no further remonstrance, but his mind was full of acute suffering on seeing the man whom he once honoured so frantic with passion. It was a blow to his pride, and the revelation that Lena still loved him, and had fled from the house on his desertion of her, planted sharp knives in his bosom.

"Sir, I think you are doing my friend an injustice," said Lord Tryon. "I can't believe that he could make an asseveration such as he has done without cause. He has generously forgiven your insult, in return I ask you, as a gentleman, to withdraw the accusation."

"Let me ask him a question and I shall prove my point," said Cavendish, turning on the speaker.

Lord Tryon drew back waiting to hear the inquiry.

"Were you engaged to my daughter?"

"Yes," replied Fred with evident emotion, "and I deserted her," while the blood fled from his face and lips as he uttered the words.

"Gentlemen, are you answered?" asked Cavendish, turning towards the two with a bitter smile on his lips.

"Ormsby, speak; I can't believe this of you," demanded Lord Tryon, while the blood mounted to his temples.

"It is true," replied Fred calmly. "I was engaged to his daughter. I pressed her to marry me, the death of her mother postponed that event. I was thrown into other society and I deserted her. I own this, to my sorrow, for she was in every way my superior. She sent me back the ring I had given her on our engagement. I understood that she was to marry another, that is some months ago. I have not seen her since. We had no quarrel. I am guilty of desertion, but of anything further I am as innocent as you are."

Lord Tryon and Sir George exchanged

significant glances ; both drew back, Ormsby did not perceive this movement, but a subtle instinct told him that the friendship that existed between them was severed. It was a poor thread which easily snapped.

Cavendish, on hearing this statement, looked at him earnestly. There was a convulsive twitching about his lips and a strange expression in his eyes. He gave a short scream as if he was stabbed and reeled forward. In a moment Fred had caught him in his arms or he would have fallen ; as it was a fit had seized him. For some minutes the united strength of the three men was hardly able to restrain the paroxysm. The servant was despatched for a doctor. When he arrived he pronounced it apoplexy brought on by mental excitement, but that the attack was a slight one. Fred ordered his carriage, nor did he leave him till he was safely deposited in his own house.

Mrs. Cavendish was in alarm when Fred came to the door, but the young man did not tell her what had taken place. He made minute inquiries about Lena's desertion, and

• if ever a man suffered in heart and in spirits it was he who returned good for evil by this act of Samaritan kindness, under provocation which was sharp and bitter, because he was now aware that from that night his prospects and his happiness were irretrievably ruined.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER THE HONEYMOON.

One ought always to consider oneself fortunate in life when one has obtained the half of what one desires.

LORD LYNDEHURST.

It was several weeks before Miles was able to leave his room. The shock he suffered proved more severe than the medical man had at first anticipated. For a time his recovery was thought doubtful, but the blow came on a frame that was robust and healthy or he would not have passed through it. His mind was shattered during the weary interval that elapsed. A merciful unconsciousness had taken place, hiding the past and thus enabling him to creep slowly from the edge of the precipice over which he hung. The doctors declined to give an opinion, but shook their heads solemnly. They enjoined perfect rest, and stated that the smallest excitement might bring on consequences of a fatal character. Not once did he allude to

his daughter or ask for any information concerning her. His wife grew alarmed when she looked at his wasted features and pinched up cheeks beneath the matted, overgrown beard which covered his face. For a time all life and animation was gone save in the restless eyes which rolled when anyone approached his bed. Once a day she slipped into his room to see him; this act was prompted as much by curiosity as duty, the motive of love had nothing to do with it. She had grown afraid of him, and illness always terrified her.

A trained nurse sat by his side all day, and was replaced by another at night. The solitude was dreary, but the hired attendants did their duty mechanically and with precision. There was inquiry in the restless, staring eyes of the invalid, with their mute appeal, that brought a cold creeping sensation down the back, and a dizzy sense of concussion in the ankle bones. Mrs. Cavenish felt this, and fled from his gaze.

“Ormsby called every day, and personally superintended the laying down of the tan

before the door ; neither was he idle in other respects. Two or three detectives were constantly coming to his rooms ; he spared no expense, but no tidings of Lena could be procured. Mrs. Cavendish was aware of this, and could not understand the man she had suspected in her headlong, impetuous way ; it was her suspicion which well-nigh killed her husband, prompting him to the rash act he had committed. She was not aware of the mischief she had done ; her pity was confined to herself, and she seriously considered herself badly used by fortune, whose fickleness is proverbial, and who seems to have the knack of never pleasing anybody.

“ I can’t do him any good by staying in,” she said, “ so I go about a little to banish sorrow. I feel I am getting ill myself ; my medical man has emphatically ordered me to go out.”

This was said to one of her visitors over a cup of tea. .

Once Fred encountered Elston in the hall as he was leaving. Elston bowed, and Fred returned the salute coldly.

In the meantime, Fred's affairs had gone from bad to worse. He had sold his pictures and had become more reckless than ever.

Mr. Cavendish had slowly regained strength, and to-day he was seated in an arm-chair, propped up with pillows. It was the first time he had left his bedroom. His illness had wrought a great change on his body and mind; his wife was prepared for the worst, and began entertaining notions of mourning; a widow's cap is not unbecoming, and a liberal jointure was a comfort to look forward to. This knowledge dawned on the broken man as he lay back on his pillows. He talked little, but he remembered his wife's desertion of him during the long illness. Part of the time he was unconscious of her heartlessness, but as his senses slowly revived, it came on him like a cold shower, drenching the warmth of his heart, and banishing all the hopes of happiness which he had foolishly built up.

He for a long time did not allude to this, but the thought of it crushed him. He was particularly silent in the company of his wife,

but profusely grateful for any little attentions she showed him.

One day she spoke of Ormsby, of his constant inquiries for his health, and of all the efforts he had made to find Lena, whom they now concluded dead; Miles listened attentively.

"You were always severe on him, my dear; but he did love my poor girl. Whatever has become of her? She took my marriage to heart; she was so devoted to her mother. I never understood either; but let the matter rest, and with regard to him, convey my thanks, but say I am not equal to an interview, should he ask for one. I hope, my dear, you will be polite to him."

"I own I have been mistaken; but there was a strong probability on my side. Who could have guessed that matters would take such a course?"

"Yes, very strange things have taken place, that none of us could foresee," he remarked with a sigh.

"You are getting strong—that is one good thing," she answered.

"I don't think you expected it, Maria?" he said, giving her a look of inquiry.

"No; the doctors were doubtful."

"But yourself. What did you think?" he asked.

She never guessed how nervously he watched for her reply.

"Really, I never expected to see you in that chair again," she said, in a matter-of-fact way.

There was a certain carelessness in her tone which jarred on him.

"You must have been wearied nursing me," he murmured, keeping his eyes on her face.

She coloured deeply as she caught his look, for she detected something in the remark which she could not understand.

"I am not a skilful nurse, but I got the best I could. I can't claim too much credit in that department."

He made no reply, but closed his eyes and leaned back.

Elston then entered the room. Mrs. Cavenish was glad of the opportunity to withdraw; the constrained atmosphere of the apartment oppressed her.

"I am glad to see you up at last," said Elston, pressing the thin fingers in his.

"Did you, too, despair of my recovery?" said Miles with meaning.

"It was a very close shave. But you have never told me how the attack came on?" asked Elston, drawing his chair close to his.

He would have been glad to know what had taken place between Mr. Cavendish and Ormsby. He would have interrogated the latter if he had not distinctly showed him that all further conversation between them was at an end.

"I am not strong enough to enter into that matter," said Miles with a shake of the head. The invalid's mind was full of another subject. "My wife seems somewhat broken down from anxiety on my account. Don't you think so?"

Elston gave him a quick glance, and then looked down in some confusion; the question took him somewhat by surprise. He did not know how far he might go in making his reply, though nothing would have given him greater pleasure than to speak out his mind on this subject.

"You seem doubtful," said Miles, noticing this hesitation, and drawing his own inferences from it, which, judging from a pained smile that played round his lips, were not of a favourable character. The mouth is one of the most expressive features of the face; its movements tell more than any other, except the eyes.

"There are some things a man ought to hesitate about before he should give expression to them," said Elston ambiguously.

He knew enough of life to understand that an insinuation is often more powerful than a direct statement, besides it always affords an opportunity to hedge.

"Is this question in that category?" inquired Miles slowly.

"I think so," was the reply.

"Suppose I say banish hesitation, and speak out," commented the invalid with some determination in his look.

"Even then it might not be prudent; it might do more harm than good."

"Dick, will you go and see if that door is closed? Just look outside. Thank you."

Elston returned to his chair.

"Now, as my friend, tell me your suspicions. You see my own are aroused already?"

Elston saw there was no further occasion for secrecy, and went on—

"No, to your first question; your wife was not anxious for your recovery. I think she is disappointed that you are alive. She married you entirely for your money—that I firmly believe. Her conduct during your illness has been disgraceful. If she had had a spark of love or kindness in her heart she would not have been out half her time at theatres and concerts, while you were tossing on a sick bed. Perhaps I should not tell you this, but it so grieved me that I can't keep back what caused me such pain. I do so now to warn you of her. I think that woman has a history which would surprise us if we could only get at it."

Miles laid his hand on the other's knee, while a nervous feeling came over him at the words he listened to.

"Tell me; don't keep back anything."

"Unfortunately I know nothing more;

but that niece of hers—you may remember Miss Hartman ? ”

“ Yes, I remember. What about her ? ”

“ She once threw out some hints to me that I have never forgotten. If we could get hold of her I believe that girl has this woman’s history in her keeping.”

“ I’d pay any sum for it,” gasped Miles with emotion.

“ Money can buy anything ; she is under pay already. What we have to do is to give more than the other side,” said Elston, whose vindictive nature knew no limits.

“ Where is Miss Hartman ? ” inquired Miles.

“ In America at present.”

“ Could she not be sent for ? ”

“ She will be home shortly. We can wait. Her engagement must be up by this.”

“ But I don’t wish to wait,” said the invalid nervously.

“ Better do so, it would only excite suspicions. I’ll see the girl when she comes, if you will only tell me to act for you.”

“ I have no one but you now, Dick ; if you

desert me I am lost. I have grown afraid of the woman I call wife. I dread to take anything from her hands. She is desperate; I found out her temper while we were away—short as the time was. Dick, she threw off the disguise. I have ruined myself,” he cried, falling back heavily on the cushions.

Elston filled him a glass of wine which revived him. They sat for some time together talking, till Mrs. Cavendish again entered, and then Elston went away.

Husband and wife were together once more, and stiff intervals of silence followed. They seemed to have nothing to say to each other. At first Mrs. Cavendish felt that this inclination was all on her side, but now it flashed upon her that a similar feeling existed in the bosom of her husband. She was not prepared for it, but an observation which he made a little later convinced her that this impression was not without foundation; not that it gave her any uneasiness—her position was secure; but her present life had become intolerable; once she had been free to do as she liked, only had lacked the means to indulge her whims.

Now she possessed the means. The freedom which she had before enjoyed was what she pined for, the enforced seclusion which her husband's illness induced was a turn of affairs which never entered into her plans. What was the good of having a husband who might survive herself, though his life might never extend beyond his chair? The doctors told her that she must never expect him to get the use of his limbs, but that with care he might live for years. This was not what she married for, and what she had no intention of submitting to,—but I must not anticipate.

“I have asked Mr. Elston to take up his residence with us for a while, my dear, till I am able to get about a little. He has not refused his old friend this favour. Will you give orders to have his room prepared?”

Miles said this with some nervousness; it cost him several minutes of reflection before he could do so, and he accompanied the words with a timid, solicitous look. He was mortally afraid of the woman he addressed, for ill-health and a broken mind subdues the strongest.

"Oh, you want a bodyguard, I see," she replied with a sneer. "Well, my dear, your wishes shall be consulted."

Miles threw a piteous glance at her as she swept out of the room, and his heart beat violently; he could hear each bump against his ribs.

CHAPTER VI.

HUMBLE LIFE.

I don't drink now; I've given it up. I used to drink once but when I did I never allowed business to interfere with it.

ANON.

And further thinks I to myself, I'll be shot
If I know whether *Lucy* adores me or not.

LOCKER.

WHILE following out the career of some of the characters in this story the principal figure has been unavoidably left to shift for herself. Here the veil is drawn aside; the reader can see for himself.

There is a quiet street in Islington, not far from the Agricultural Hall. The place is not fashionable, so there is no occasion for giving the name. At number 134 a cab was drawn up; two little girls, aged eleven and fourteen, had rushed out to meet the occupant. He seemed very much encumbered with sundry articles which he had with him. First there was a large bunch of flowers from Covent Garden, a pot of Devonshire cream, a little basket of American apples with

tempting rosy cheeks, two or three paper bags containing biscuits and other delicacies, a large bottle of champagne with its golden head looking out curiously from a flesh-coloured suit of pink paper, like a city magnate in scant drapery but of aldermanic dimensions.

“La! Jack, what lovely things have you under your arm?” screamed the younger girl, as with rounded eyes she watched the young man descend from the vehicle.

“Never you mind, Lizzie, but just take these apples. Eh! Ain’t they lovely? When would a little town girl get such a colour in her cheeks?”

Annie, the eldest, with more gravity, took some of the articles from his hands and deposited them on the hall table, returning for the rest, while Lizzie’s sense of intense wonder interfered with her usefulness. She stood, however, watching the proceedings with decided interest.

When Jack saw that all was removed he paid the cabman and returned to the house. A black cat had sat on the top of the

stairs, musing, perhaps, on the vanity of human honours, for he was decorated with a bit of red tape about his neck which he would have gladly dispensed with. On seeing Jack he rose from his easy position, lifted his tail, and went to meet him, rubbing his head against his legs in mute welcome.

"My hands are full, Charles Edward," said the young man, observing the graceful creature who fussed about him. "Lizzie, I charge you with the apples. Taste one and see if it is nice."

This order was quickly obeyed.

The room they entered was poorly furnished, but everything in it was neatly ordered, and there was not a speck of dust to be seen. A sofa was drawn near a bright little fire; there were some coloured pictures from the *Graphic*, neatly framed, on the walls, and several well-executed cartoons of living celebrities with large heads and no bodies to speak of; a little cottage piano, piled high with music, stood near the wall, a bunch of artificial flowers under a glass shade stood on a very unsteady one-legged

round table near the window ; the carpet was a light drugget, and the fender and fire-irons were cheap but bright and shining.

"Now, Annie, put on the table cloth and we will get things in order," said Jack, opening his pen-knife to cut some of the strings which bound one of the parcels.

"'Tis hardly time yet, Mr. Dalton," said the girl, looking at him with her great steady eyes.

There was the subdued look of a woman of forty in that child.

"Not a bit of it. It will take some time to arrange things. Moreover I want to see how everything will look before she comes down."

Annie at once began to lay the table. Jack took down a glass jug and two tumblers and proceeded to distribute the flowers between them, whistling softly to himself as he performed this piece of work.

"Lizzie, go and see how your mother is getting on with the pie. Stop, how did you like the apple? Just hand me one. Now hold it while I am taking a bite."

Lizzie uttered a little scream of delight.

"Oh, Jack, they are the best apples I ever tasted," said the child, pleased to have her opinion called for.

"Well, considering, Lizzie, that you eat a good deal of that particular food, I think you are a good judge," said Jack, "though I think you could offer a shrewd remark on toffy and American candy, eh, Lizzie?"

"That I could," said Lizzie, with a bulge in one cheek which interfered very much with her utterance.

"Now run, and if you fall don't wait to get up," said Jack placidly.

He was a great favourite with little people.

"Annie, what do you think of that?" he asked, holding up the flowers.

"Oh, they are lovely," said the girl, who had been throwing frequent glances at him while putting the table in order.

"Mr. Dalton, I didn't think flowers grew in the winter. All ours are dead; there are nothing but a few withered leaves in the pots."

"That's because you did not put any gold at the roots."

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl with surprise. "I never knew that gold would make them grow."

"Yes, Annie, gold makes almost everything grow—beautiful flowers and ugly weeds, but there are some things that it can't make grow."

"What are those?" she asked curiously. Annie was of a reflective turn of mind.

"You won't understand me if I tell you, but it won't make the flowers of kindness, gratitude, or love blossom. Gold is no good there."

"Gratitude is not a flower," said the child, puzzled.

"No, nor kindness, nor love for that matter. They are lovely things, not unlike flowers, only we can't see them, more is the pity. By Jove! What a nice thing it would be if one could go down to Covent Garden and see the flowers of love, and kindness, and generosity. Bah! If it were so they would be putting a big price on them, and

poor people could not get a sprig. Annie, it is far better as it is ; the rich folks have enough already. We will not envy them ; poor people with their carriages and horses, and fine clothes and grand houses."

"Why do you call them poor then?" asked Annie, not understanding his satire.

"Because they have so little love, or generosity, or pity in their hearts. They are always hating each other or envying each other, and never contented."

"I know what love is," said Annie, catching hold of that word, and letting the rest go as something above her understanding.

"Do you indeed? That's rather soon. Who told you about it?"

"I won't tell you," she replied, blushing.

Jack laughed, and Annie beat a retreat, for there was nothing she disliked more than being laughed at.

The table was fully arranged, the hearth neatly brushed, the fire blazing, the red curtains drawn, shutting out the cold wintry night, while the humorous faces on the walls looked down and gave a habitable, convivial look to the apartment.

Lucy came in, leaning on her landlady's arm, looking pale and worn. She wore a cap on her head, for her bright hair was shorn. She was very thin, but the same sweet smile as of old was on her lips as she surveyed the room, and then her glance rested on Dalton, who came forward to meet her with a confused but honest welcome on his kindly face.

"Oh, Miss Severn, look at the flowers," implored Lizzie. "Jack arranged them himself; he would not let me touch one till you had seen them."

Dalton blushed at this comment; he felt the girl's eyes on him.

"Little girls should be seen, not heard," he tried to say.

"Well, I am sure 'tis yourself that has spoiled her," said the mother. "I can't abide her calling you Jack as if she was your equal."

"And who says she is not?" replied the young man.

"'Tis his own doing, Miss Severn. He pets that child that much, I believe she would go through fire and water for him. I think he will spoil her at last."

“ I am sure he is trying to spoil me too,” said Lucy, taking in the festive preparations which the table exhibited.

“ La, he never could do that ! ” said the kind-hearted woman. “ You are too good to be spoiled.”

“ Well done, Mrs. Cartwright. If I said that it would be flattery, but you have just expressed my feelings. Miss Severn, this is only a little banquet in honour of your coming back to life again. We thought you were going to leave us ; I am sure the angels were longing for you ; but however, I am not sorry that you have preferred to stay with us, poor as we are.”

The tears stood in Lucy's eyes when she felt the kindness and generosity of the true friends who stood round her, and the room shone in her eyes with more splendour than the palace of a queen.

I now return to the time when Lena left her home, and by the time the banquet is at an end the reader will be in possession of her story.

In one of her walks, taken for the purpose,

she had secured lodgings in Islington—a poor neighbourhood where she was sure to escape detection. It was not exactly the kind of place she liked, but a bill in the window had attracted her notice. The landlady's manner was quiet, respectful, and civil. She asked no impertinent questions, but accepted the girl's story with a quiet nod of the head and a look of sympathy as if there was nothing unusual in the simple tale.

“I have lost both father and mother ; I have a little money, and I want to manage for myself.”

It was the way she received this statement that went to Lena's heart, deciding her in her choice.

“Poor child,” thought the woman with a yearning look. “I have two girls myself, not grown and handsome like you, but good girls. I'll make you as comfortable as I can. What name did you say, miss ? ”

“Lucy Severn,” replied Lena timidly.

It was her first deceit. The name she gave was that of a dear school friend who had died long since.

Lucy would not have scrupled to give her the loan of her name; for she had given her her heart long before it had grown cold in Highgate Cemetery.

"And when shall I expect you, Miss Severn?" asked the landlady.

"After to-morrow, about eight o'clock. If anything should prevent me coming I will write."

Lena paid for a month's lodging, and the matter was definitely settled.

"Don't forget the number of the house; my name is Mrs. Cartwright. Now I must go to my work; you will find everything ready when you arrive."

This was what Lena had done. She waited for an opportunity to get her trunks removed, and already longed to get into her new abode.

The reader may remember that she had driven to the Euston Station.

On arriving there she paid the cabman; a porter next seized her trunk, swinging it lightly on its end in a headlong way peculiar to porters, while he asked in an equally energetic tone—

"Where to, ma'am?"

"I don't wish to get it labelled for awhile. My destination will depend on the arrival of a friend by the next train."

All this had been settled in her mind; at first, giving expression to the deception caused her much uneasiness, but the decided indifference of those around her soon gave her more confidence.

"The 7.45 has just come in," said the porter, dropping the luggage and bolting into the crowd.

A throng of people hustled forth. Lena stood alone, her veil over her face. A cabman, seeing her on guard over her luggage and thinking she was one of the late arrivals tried to catch her attention. She nodded to him. The next moment the trunk was hoisted to the roof. She gave him the address, and at twenty minutes past eight arrived at her destination. Thus Lena Cavendish had faded into the darkness and Lucy Severn reigned in her stead.

Miss Severn, as I must call her for the present, after a few weeks in her new abode began to feel the weariness of life to a degree

that she had never experienced before. Her exchequer began to run low, so that cares of a new order stared her in the face. Work she must, but she could not get anything to do. She soon experienced the difficulty of the problem which is vexing modern reformers, namely, the occupation of women. Innumerable stamps were lost in applying for situations which appeared in the newspapers, but nothing came of them but vexation and disappointment. At last she was driven to apply for counsel to her landlady.

"What can you do?" asked the practical Mrs. Cartwright, folding her arms and looking very grave.

"Very little, I am afraid," Lena said hopelessly.

"Oh! come, we must not despair. That is not the way to begin. You have a good education; that ought to lead to something."

"I can't do needlework, nor can I teach children," said Lucy, "and it seems that everything else requires training."

"The machines and the School Boards are too much for us, now. There is no use

thinking of them ; besides, the pay for needle-work would not keep you in boots. Of course one could get a machine in the house, but I am afraid we had better give up that notion," said Mrs. Cartwright, slowly weighing the matter and reluctantly abandoning the project as hopeless.

"I think so too," said Lucy in despair, the prospect of machine work not proving attractive. "I should not object to pay something to be taught an employment."

"Precious little you would gain by that ; besides, a young woman of your age should be taking money, not paying others for your labour. I don't hold at all with that. There is my Lizzie ; she is not twelve yet, and she has been taking money these three months. She began with six shillings a week, but a child, you see, could not expect more ; could she, now ?"

Lena assented to this proposition, though she felt the digression had no bearing on her case.

"It is in a dentist's establishment," continued Mrs. Cartwright, growing communicative.

"What does she know of that business?" asked Lena, wondering what a child of Lizzie's tender years knew about the delicate business of defective mastication. Poverty was unfolding to her strange revelations of social life.

"She only pastes labels on boxes and runs errands," was the quiet reply.

"I'll tell you what," exclaimed the landlady, taking up the breakfast tray. She had been standing all this time; her reflective powers would have come to a dead-stop had she sat down. "I'll tell you what, I'll just go to my work and turn it over in my mind, and when I come to lay the dinner things I'll let you know what decision I have come to. Don't you be afeared, we will find something I promise you, not but it is high time you should be at work, if you will not mind my saying so."

Lucy received this speech in silence. There was a crumb of hope, notwithstanding the implied rebuke, which consoled her. It was a comfort to get anyone to share the anxiety which had overburdened her. She

turned once more to the pages of the *Telegraph* for some unknown occupation, the very uncertainty giving a sense of pleasure of an imperceptible character ; her hopefulness was not yet thrashed out.

How often her mind travelled towards home and its surroundings. Frequently she found herself picturing what was taking place there, but the thought that her mother was gone and another in her place made this severance more tolerable. She sometimes pitied her father, never doubting that the time would come when his eyes would be opened, and that he would grow to dislike the woman he had made his wife as cordially as she did herself. His kindness and his love for her came back, the thought of his marriage and the cruel blow it gave her was forgotten ; still her father was dead to her. It is only a half truth that the "evil men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones." Rather the evil that men do lives contemporaneously with them, while the good often waits their disappearance to emerge distinctly into view. Memory is

always just; it now brought before her the thousand loving attentions once lavished on her by her father, and never entirely forgotten. The balance was easily struck in his favour, and her eyes filled with tears at the pain her desertion must have caused him.

CHAPTER VII.

A MUSIC SHOP IN THE BOROUGH.

A beautiful and virtuous woman is the mirage which peoples with lakes and green avenues our great moral deserts. Women restore us to communication with the eternal spring in which God reflects Himself.

E. RENAN.

MRS. CARTWRIGHT put on her bonnet and cloak, and after entrusting the charge of the house to Annie, with sundry cautions about what was to be done in her absence, she set out for King's Cross. Having reached that lively centre, where vice and business are always represented, no matter what the hour of day, she looked round her, and seeing a green omnibus hailed it. The next moment she was holding a brisk conversation with another woman who was packed beside her as they drove in the direction of Camberwell. As the object of her journey will appear presently, I shall let the good woman take care of herself so far—a duty she was highly capable of performing, seeing that for the last ten years she had done so with credit.

Mrs. Cartwright was not a strong woman in a physical sense; her somewhat narrow shoulders and slight figure hinted at constitutional delicacy somewhere; but she had a brave heart, and the good-humoured smile on her large mouth told you that she was not afraid of the future, and her light easy movement and firm step, seen as she picked her way through the crowd, never pushed aside or thrown back, but seeing the openings and availing herself of them, convinced you that up to the present she had no reason for apprehension. A capable woman shows her ability in everything, even to the putting on of a shawl.

Ten years ago she had laid her husband under the sod, after nursing him for three years with consumption. He left her two children and a small house property to take charge of. He had been an honest, faithful servant in a banking house, and the managers, to mark their sense of his sterling qualities, paid the widow's rent, allowing a sum of ten pounds a year to each child till they should be able to work for themselves. This is the

way to ensure good clerks and public servants. Convince a man that his wife and children, when he is taken from them, will not be allowed to starve, and you give him a motive for fidelity and carefulness, which is better than all the penalties which the law lays down. The widow suppressed her tears, turned a bright face to the world and struggled on. She put her hand to all kinds of work—rough and smooth. She met with trials and disappointments, as every brave soul must and will; but she had survived them, and now her circumstances were easy. She could rest if she liked, but she went on as usual, active and busy, setting a noble example to her children and adding largely to her own happiness.

Lucy sat pondering over her affairs in that silent, helpless way which her previous education naturally entailed. She seldom went out, for there was always a fear that she might meet someone who knew her. Elston was the one she most apprehended, for she knew he was in the habit of wandering about at all hours and in all places.

Mrs. Cartwright, on her return, came straight into Lucy's room. The girl thought from her manner that she had something to communicate.

"I have been thinking about you, Miss Severn, and I really think the best thing we could do would be to write to some of your friends."

Lucy's face fell. She had not expected this, for the announcement implied failure.

"I have no friends, Mrs. Cartwright, unless you will let me call you one; perhaps I should not do so," she said, turning aside to conceal the tear that ran down her cheek.

"You are very welcome to do that, my dear, but I am talking for your good. You have asked my advice; I must say what I think. You see being a lady unfits you for any of the work that it is in my way to procure; that's what it is."

Lucy felt faint and ill. She saw that her landlady had despaired. "She will ask me to leave next," she thought. The interview soon came to an end, but that night she slept very little. The sense of one's uselessness in so

large a world is not only a blow to our pride, but a cause of acute sorrow. There is many a burden we are called upon to bear, but to be compelled to think that we are not wanted, that our work is not asked for, and ourselves a superfluity, is the hardest in the world. The sight of others bustling in the streets, coming and going from their daily employment, is a reproach to us, as we stand by the window and envy even their anxiety and the resolute look which they carry with them as they hurry along, foot-sore and heart-sore though they be. Lucy's tears blinded her as she watched from the window and thought of other days, with a fluttering at the heart and a strange dizziness in the head which made her ill.

Next morning Mrs. Cartwright perceived Lucy's pale cheeks and tired looks; the kind-hearted woman felt distressed, she lingered in the room longer than usual.

"Miss Severn, there is something I should like to say. I hope you won't be offended with me if I mention it," she said, as she stood at the door.

Lucy's heart beat fast, an apprehension of some unknown calamity made her icy cold; perhaps she wanted her to give up the apartments; her fears took the worst form.

"Speak out," said the girl, clasping her hands tightly in her lap to check the emotion which disturbed her.

"'Tisn't, of course, what you are used to, and folks say he is no great things, but still someone must take it, and a pound a week is not to be had every day," murmured her landlady in an apologetic tone, which roused Lucy's attention.

"If you refer to any respectable situation which offers a pound a week, I should esteem myself fortunate if I could procure it."

"The work is not very heavy, either," put in Mrs. Cartwright, who took it for granted that her explanation was so full that it required no further addition.

"Tell me what it is?" said the girl, brightening.

"Well, it is in a music shop in the Borough, they want a young lady to play on the pianos and exhibit them to customers. They pay a

pound a week, which is good pay ; if you like it, the situation is yours," said Mrs. Cartwright with more confidence, seeing the girl's face brighten.

Lucy expressed herself delighted with the offer, and next day Mrs. Cartwright was to go with her in person to the house ; the good woman never mentioned the hard fight she had had to get this, and the difficulty she encountered in making them raise the fourteen shillings a week to a pound, which she had assured them would be the lowest her lodger would accept.

The master of the establishment was a short, stout, ill-looking fellow, who eyed Lucy sharply as she entered ; it made the girl's face colour once or twice when she perceived this, but she sat down before the instrument he opened for her and played a few chords with masterly skill. Mr. Cook pronounced himself satisfied, and the engagement was settled forthwith. Lucy was to come at nine every morning and leave at eight, she was to have half-an-hour for dinner, and a small percentage on each sale.

How happy Lucy felt as she walked home, that first evening after her work ! she was one of the throng of workers, and had a part in the great and active striving million, and when she brought home her first pound with five shillings in addition her happiness reached its climax. Independence lay before her, and she began to feel that the poor had pleasures which were denied the wealthy and idle.

Mr. Cook found frequent occasions for going into the show-rooms ; at first Lucy did not notice this, but soon she perceived that her presence caused his visits.

“How cold you are, Miss Severn,” he remarked one day, as he stood near her at a time when they were alone.

Lucy started ; the colour rushed to her face as she turned away her head, and she could make him no reply.

“Now you blush in the most natural way in the world ; come, I like that, nothing like being modest and all that, but there is no use in carrying it too far. Now I am not a bad sort of chap, and I am very much pleased with

you. I was just thinking of giving you a little treat. Tell me, what do you say to it?"

Lucy thought she might have been deceived, and that this man, in his vulgar way, intended doing her a kindness, besides he was her employer.

"I am much obliged for your kindness, Mr. Cook; I am pleased to know I give satisfaction," she replied, with downcast eyes.

"Spoken like a civil girl, which you are. You don't know how much I would do for anyone I like"—

Here a customer entered, and Lucy was spared further attentions from her oppressive employer.

Lucy told this occurrence to Mrs. Cartwright that evening, and said how kind he was, although she could have dispensed with his politeness.

Her landlady watched her narrowly as she recounted the proceedings.

"Don't you have nothing to say to that man, but what you can't help," she said severely. "My dear, you are as innocent as a baby, that you are."

It is not in British human nature of the order to which Mrs. Cartwright belonged to avoid putting an occasional "h" where it has no business. When she grew excited she became reckless of the letters of the alphabet. To do her justice, she spoke the Queen's English with singular purity for one of her class, having, before she married, lived with one or two titled families as lady's maid. Lucy thought that just then she grew unnecessarily excited, but never suspected that this discourse prompted the good woman to pay a visit to her employer's establishment. She only noticed that for the next week or two Mr. Cook talked very little to her, though she perceived his eyes were often on her when he thought she was not noticing him.

Mrs. Cook was a tall, stout woman, with a harsh, grating voice; she had looked doubtfully at Lucy at first, but in time grew to like her. She used sometimes to come and sit with her, and insist upon Lucy's taking her tea with her. Mr. Cook on such occasions was never present. Gradually, Lucy came to see that human nature was

much the same everywhere. In Mrs. Cook's back parlour, as well as in the Belgravian drawing-room, women talk in much the same way over that social beverage. Mrs. Cook unfolded her family trials, did not conceal Cook's peccadilloes, and poured out her domestic sorrows into the sympathetic ears of her listener, who was shocked and humiliated with what she heard. Mr. Cook from henceforth was looked on with distrust.

One day, after a customer had left, he lingered in the room talking to Lucy about the purchase. He took great pains to explain to her certain technicalities in the business, which she was in no wise desirous of learning, but she listened with politeness.

"I have not forgotten that little treat I mentioned to you, Miss Severn, but you see I have had so much business on my hands lately that I had to put it aside," he said, dusting a piano before which she sat, and coming round to her side.

"I thank you for your kindness, Mr. Cook, but it is not necessary for you to excuse yourself. I look for nothing but work, and

the payment you give me here," she said rising.

"But the treat," he remarked. "You tell me you never go to any place of amusement. Now, I want to give you a little fun; Monday next will be a Bank Holiday. Would you like to see Roserville Gardens? I'll stand everything, you know."

Lucy looked at him in astonishment. She felt too confounded with his insolence to give an immediate reply, but her eyes were full of contempt.

"What would your wife think of such a proceeding?"

"Oh! bless you, the mistress won't know a word about it," he said with a laugh, not noticing her indignation. "You get on with her first rate. Look here, I tell you she is mad jealous of every young woman who comes in. I can't help it, you see; for the truth is I am nowhere if a pretty girl comes in my way, and you are splendid and no mistake; a good joke too, my wife believes in you," and he forced a laugh.

"If she does, she will never do so again,

that she won't!" screamed the harsh voice of Mrs. Cook, who had all this time been eaves-dropping. Lucy's question she took as an encouragement to his addresses. Now that her fury was excited, the jealous woman sprang on the unsuspecting girl from behind, and before Cook could interfere, tore out a handful of the girl's hair, and was proceeding to exercise her nails on her victim, when her husband dealt her a blow on the ear which sent her sprawling on the floor.

"Now, Miss Severn, take your hat and get away as fast as you can. I'll write to you. There is no knowing what this mad woman would do if she found you here when she comes to," he said, accompanying her to the door, while his cheeks were pale and his hands shook:

Lucy left with stars floating before her eyes, from the fall she had received. All this had come so suddenly that she could hardly realise what she had gone through; between anger and disgust she was speechless; it was only when she found herself in the street, with a bruised head, and a strange singing in

her ears, that she felt that she had once more become the sport of fortune, and the plaything of circumstances. She had to pass London Bridge on her way home, and in one of the recesses she sat down to rest; the water ran smooth and dark beneath, and the long rows of lamps, like fire points, glistened on the river—the crowd was surging past in its usual preoccupied manner, and the girl felt that a straw floating under the arches, heaven knows where, could not be more insignificant than her tiny drop of existence, which just then seemed so absolutely impertinent a superfluity. What sickness of heart accompanied the look she threw around her. The night was dry and cold, still she felt something tricking down her back; raising her hand to her head she felt the large bump caused by her fall against the corner of the piano; when she looked at her fingers they were red with blood. Poor Lucy would have made a bad soldier, for this sight made her dizzy. She would have fallen had not a man's arm supported her. She was next conscious of being placed in a cab and driven somewhere.

When she recovered, she found she was in a small room; there were two men present; one was a doctor, he had dressed the wound, the other was a short, stout gentleman, who came over to her when she opened her eyes and looked round in astonishment.

"It is only a mere scratch. I hope you are not offended with me for not telling you what I was doing, but the fact is you became unconscious. See, I have some hot wine waiting for you. Now, come—no I won't take any denial. Drink it up and you will be as right as a trivet."

All she said was "Thanks," but this was uttered in a low, sweet voice.

"Now I'll call a cab, and when you get home, just go to bed at once, and that scratch will be better before you are twice married," he said in a cheerful voice.

She smiled faintly, and expressed her obligations, without explaining how she came by the wound, neither did he exhibit any curiosity.

"Where shall I tell him to drive to?" he asked, after he had helped her in; she told him the place.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed in surprise, and then the cab drove off.

For some days Lucy kept her room. Mrs. Cartwright’s indignation knew no bounds; a note came from Mr. Cook, it went straight into the fire. Not hearing from her as he expected he called to know how she was. Mrs. Cartwright admitted him into the hall, then, after giving him a piece of her mind in language abounding in strong expressions and not wanting in superlatives, she concluded her discourse by slamming the door behind him; judging from his looks as he issued into the street he was not interested in her observations. Indeed, he went away feeling insulted and with a magnanimity which no one was aware of except himself, he generously forwarded the full amount of Lena’s weekly wages, though it wanted two days of being complete.

It is not in the nature of things for a young lady to forget the timely assistance proffered by a friend, and when he is unknown and a stranger the act of kindness is likely to be magnified beyond its proper dimen-

sions ; imagination, like a gleam of light, plays about the occurrence putting it in all sorts of colours. This was how Lucy looked back at the subject, not that she had not plenty more to think about which caused her to shed tears. Her position was full of trial. She, however, was determined to face the hard circumstances, and had no notion of giving up the fight.

One day as she was thinking over what she would do next, Lizzie burst into the room, exclaiming in her exuberant manner—

“ Oh, Miss Severn, look what a nice thing I have brought you ! ”

It was a little picture in water colours. Lucy looked at it with a sigh, it reminded her of some of the things she used to do once for amusement.

“ Who gave you this, Lizzie ? ” she enquired, patting the child’s head.

“ Jack ; he gives me all sorts of nice things, but he has been away so long, now he says he is not going away for some time. He pays mother for his rooms though he is not here. Isn’t it good of him ? I love Jack,

and mother loves him, and Annie more than all, but she does not say so," said the child in her voluble way.

"Tell me, who is Jack?" asked Lucy, looking at the bright little face and forgetting her troubles. This little visitor rarely failed in doing her good.

"Not know Jack!" exclaimed the child with astonishment.

"Is he an artist?"

"I don't know," replied the child puzzled, "but he brings me sweets and pretty things, and I love him. Mother was telling Jack about you," she added, giving forth her knowledge as it came into her head.

Lucy blushed.

One of the trials of poverty is its being discussed by one's neighbour and pitied; perhaps it was not the lightest portion of its trials, especially if sensitiveness is a trait of the sufferer; the respectable poor have a monopoly of those questionable qualities, pride and sensitiveness.

"Why did you get red?" asked the child, nothing escaped her quick, observant eyes, "you did nothing naughty."

"Never mind, Lizzie, only tell me what your mother said of me?" enquired Lucy hurriedly and indiscreetly.

A child's candour is terrible; luckily they are easily diverted from whatever subject attracts them.

"They sent me out of the room. Oh, there is Jack coming down stairs, I must go to meet him," and the child bounded away, leaving Lucy once more to herself.

CHAPTER VIII.

DALTON IN LOVE.

When we talk in the darkness we speak more faithfully than when we see each other's faces ; and we also say more.

BJÖRNSON.

Expectation fainted, longing for what it had not.

SHAKESPEARE.

THERE was a struggle going on in the hall, some such words as these reached Lucy's ears and made her pause : " Let me go," entreated a male voice ; " No I shan't ! " exclaimed a child's ; and then a shuffling of feet followed, more entreaty and further opposition ; at last she heard a voice cry, " Miss Severn ! Miss Severn ! "

Lucy opened the door, and there she beheld the good Samaritan who had bound up her wounds and poured into her heart kindly consolation on the night she was turned from Cook's house.

" Mr. Dalton, we have met before ! " she exclaimed frankly, giving him her hand.

There was no mistaking the joy in his countenance, and she saw it.

For a moment he grew embarrassed, while he tried to say something.

"Ask him to come in and sit down," said Lizzie; "he was going away, I wanted him to come in and see you."

Both laughed, and Dalton could not decline the invitation when made by Miss Severn.

"I hope I have not intruded," he remarked, feeling that the introduction was rather informal.

"Pray don't stand on formality; the timely assistance you rendered me has often made me crave for an opportunity of thanking you more fully. Won't you take a seat?"

"Ask him to sing, Miss Severn, he has such nice songs—songs that he made himself," put in Lizzie.

"You have made a great conquest, Mr. Dalton; Lizzie has been sounding your trumpet some days. I hope to have the pleasure of hearing you sing."

Jack made some floundering reply, and soon

after, despite Lizzie's protests, left the room. But the ice was broken, and he had made the acquaintance of the woman whose image had filled his mind night and day since that memorable evening when he had met her forlorn and wretched. What was it that had come over him, making him nervous and restless? He wandered about the streets a great deal, and came several times to the recess on London Bridge where he first met her, merely to revive the presence of that sweet face which seemed to him more than mortal in its loveliness. How many women he had heard speak, but none of them had that peculiar sweetness of tone which touched his heart. He occasionally fell into a mood of asking himself questions, which was a new state to him, full of sweet perplexity and not devoid of pleasure. He seemed mentally to be searching himself for something, the existence of which he had never looked for before. For the first time he felt that his life was aimless and unlovely, and he wished he was a better man. "What in the world does it all mean?" he asked himself, puzzled

and confused with this new sensation; "has this young woman bewitched me, or am I getting ill, or what the dickens does it mean? I can't get her out of my head or the sound of her voice out of my ears. I can't sleep without thinking of her; I was dying to see her, and when I got into her company I was burning to get away again. She will think me a fool, and I know I looked like one." Vainly did he try to shake off this influence, but the more he struggled the more entangled he became.

One morning Mrs. Cartwright, while removing the breakfast things, suggested to Lucy the notion of teaching singing.

"I know some who would be glad to get lessons," she pleaded.

Lucy smiled.

"I had thought of that, but I have no piano. To buy one would take nearly all my money," she replied.

"Mr. Dalton has one in his rooms, he said he should be pleased if you would use it."

Lucy coloured, she thought of what Lizzie had told her. Presently she answered—

“Tell Mr. Dalton I shall be obliged. When could he let me have it?”

“I’ll speak of it when he comes home this evening,” replied her landlady as she left the room.

In a few weeks Lizzie was busy. She found several pupils by advertising, and the labour was not entirely disagreeable; it did not entail absence from home, and the work was fairly remunerative. Jack was induced to overcome his bashfulness and come in sometimes; the children enjoyed his comic performances, and while they were present he was himself. Lucy soon forgot her sadness; it was only when alone that her heart went off to other scenes, and, do what she would, her tears would flow; the memory of Fred haunted her like her shadow, and she searched the papers constantly to find any mention of him.

Dalton’s humorous representations, his songs, and his stories kept her from falling into despondency, and her daily work with her pupils filled up the time. There was no room for sentimental sorrows.

Jack was quick to perceive that something weighed on her mind, and without pretending to notice it he was always on the alert to procure her some diversion, until gradually a strong bond of friendship sprang up between them.

"I wonder whether she will ever grow to like me?" he asked Mrs. Cartwright one day, as she stood in his room before he went out. Jack had no secrets, from the first he had taken his landlady into his confidence.

"She is sure to, only don't you go proposing too soon."

"Why, did you think I was going downstairs this minute to ask her? I know better than that, Mrs. Cartwright; besides, I have no home to offer her, and then look at the sort of fellow I have been."

"I think you would be good enough for any woman," she answered quietly.

"There you are again, you forget what Miss Severn is, she is not like other women. Why, there is not another girl in London like her; what could she see in me?"

"If you go running yourself down like that, you won't have much chance."

"Do girls, then, like a fellow to be cheeky and all that?" he asked suddenly.

"Why, of course they do," was the confident reply.

Jack went away pondering over this piece of advice; the business was all new to him, and his landlady's words seemed like the inspiration of a prophet.

There was one thing which it did for him, and which astonished most of his companions, he drank less, became more industrious, and some said that he had turned miser. All the money he could spare was put by for some object, and none of his associates could find out his motive for doing so.

One evening he found traces of tears on Lucy's face as she responded to his modest tap at her door. She did not expect him, and they were alone. She did not appear embarrassed.

"You have been crying," he ventured to say, taking her hand. "I suppose you are worried by those pupils?"

"No, it was not that," she replied simply, "but I get sad when I think of some past

scenes in my life ; tears are a woman's privilege. I don't often indulge in them."

Her words touched him to the quick, but for a while he could say nothing. She felt his silent sympathy.

"Don't trouble about it, my friend, the brightest day must have some clouds."

"If I were clerk of the weather I would never let a cloud come near you," he said awkwardly. "This is too jocular a tone" he thought, but for the life of him he could not think of anything else to say.

That was the nearest approach to sentimentality which had taken place between them.

Jack, however, had a powerful ally in his landlady who was never tired of blowing his bugle ; she enumerated his virtues, expatiated on his generosity, and summed up by asserting that there was not his equal in the world.

Lucy listened to this with a smile. She did not doubt the statements, but her thoughts rambled off to someone else who held her heart, and like a dream some scene they had gone through together would come

back to her with a madness of reality. Mrs. Cartwright never could understand the long-drawn sigh which sometimes followed when the dream had faded, and the young girl asked, "What was that you were speaking of, my friend?"

"She is thinking of someone else," murmured the good woman as she went downstairs.

The pupils came one morning, but their teacher could not attend to them, she lay in bed hot and feverish.

"I think there is something the matter with Miss Severn," said the landlady to Dalton, who was reading the paper.

He sprang to his feet, his cheeks suddenly paled.

"She is not ill," he exclaimed.

"I think she is. If the doctor was called in perhaps it would do no harm."

Jack heard no more. In a minute he was in the street. Half-an-hour afterwards an eminent physician had pronounced the symptoms to be feverish. It was not of a severe order, no positive danger, but it must take its course.

He said all this as he was pulling on his gloves in a quiet matter-of-fact tone while Jack stood listening to him like one dazed. This was the way he got to know how dear she was to him, how necessary her presence had become to his happiness. "The world would not be worth walking in, if I thought she had stepped out of it," he said.

Dreary days passed by, dreary nights of sick anticipations chasing each other like shadows over the hill-side. Mrs. Cartwright watched by the girl's bed-side, and heard enough during the wild ravings to make her lift her apron to her eyes and sob outright. The secret that had been kept so tightly closed in the girl's heart now came out in snatches which the good woman had no difficulty in piecing together. Lucy constantly talked of Fred and her mother. She seemed to be living over again the scenes of the past.

Jack could never go to rest until he had seen Mrs. Cartwright. He waited up most of the night thinking, and longed to hear her step enter his room. His haggard appearance smote her with pain, knowing how hope-

less his case was; and the pity in her eyes, for which he could not account, caused him further anxiety.

The clock had struck one as she came to his door one night. She knew he had not gone to rest, for she had heard him a few minutes before pacing the room. She entered, however, without his perceiving her, for his head was held down and his eyes were fixed on something he had in his hand. The room was in darkness save the feeble light which came from the fire. It was one long tress of Lucy's hair which he was gazing at. During her illness her hair had been removed, and Jack had secured this tress, it was a treasure he would not part with. His landlady coughed to attract his attention, she noticed his occupation with a spasm of sorrow.

"Well, Mrs. Cartwright, what is the news?" he exclaimed, hastily concealing the lock of hair.

"The crisis has passed, she is now out of danger."

"Thank God for it," he exclaimed fervently.

The woman said nothing.

"Why do you think so much of her?" she asked confusedly. She did not like to see him so earnest about one whom she now knew could never return his love. And yet she could not divulge the girl's secret, it was a difficult position to be placed in; but this kind-hearted woman was not deficient either in tact or tenderness.

"Why do I think so much of her?" he repeated. "Many a time I have asked myself that question. Why? why? but I have had to give it up. It is only in some other world that we shall know the why of much that passes here, but this I know, that her life is more to me than any other on earth."

"She never can be too thankful to you, at all events; you let her want for nothing."

"Why talk of thanks?" he murmured. "One smile from her lips would repay years of suffering."

"Well, she will soon be able to hear you tell her so."

"What frets me most is," he went on, not noticing her words, "that I have a notion

that I am not worthy of her, and that it is presumption in me to hope ever to win her favour."

"I think you had better go to bed now and get some rest, people will think it is you who have been ill and not her," said the practical woman, taking up her candle and wishing him good-night.

"What a world it is," she thought with a sigh as she left somewhat irritated with the interview.

To Lucy all appeared as a troubled dream as she opened her eyes one morning, consciousness had crept back to its throne, and she lay looking all round her with a confused sense that something strange had occurred. The first object she noticed was a silent figure near her bed, knitting.

"Is that you, Mrs. Cartwright?" she asked, after gazing at her for some time in silence.

"Well, Miss Severn, that is the first sensible question you have asked this long time."

"I have been ill," the girl remarked, as she experienced a feeling of weakness, when she tried to turn on her side.

"You were, but you will be better soon, thank God."

"What has become of my hair?" she asked, with a sudden start.

"It is all there in the drawer. The doctor would have it off."

For awhile the girl continued silent, trying to catch the broken thread of her life. Then she asked, "Have I talked much?"

"Yes, you were delirious; no one but myself and the doctor has heard what you said."

"What names did I mention?"

"I don't think I can let you talk any more just now, else it will affect your head; by-and-bye I will answer your question. You must try and sleep now, only don't be uneasy; no one was with you but myself."

"You are very good to me," the girl answered, closing her eyes, and then she sank into a quiet sleep.

Next day she felt decidedly better, and the restful feeling she experienced was similar to that which the voyager feels after having been buffeted by the waves and the tempest,

on reaching a quiet bay, when all is smooth and the sun is warm and the rocking has ceased.

"Who has procured me all these delicacies?" she asked, turning her eyes towards the table, on which some splendid hot-house grapes lay.

"Mr. Dalton brought them himself," was the reply, and then the woman launched into a discourse on that man's merits, a theme on which she grew eloquent. Lucy listened in silence until she had done.

"How very good of him. Do tell him how grateful I am."

Jack received this message with delight, and longed for the time when she would be able to come down stairs.

He found out from the doctor what she would be likely to ask for, and the pleasure of anticipating her wants was the greatest delight to him. Neither was Lucy left in ignorance of this, for her landlady was sure to bring in his name so often that the girl could not help being impressed with his attentions. One day her eyes were greeted

with a bunch of hot-house flowers, and the sight of them caused the tears to run down her cheeks. "I used to have flowers like these, Mrs. Cartwright; my father had a splendid conservatory. I was very happy till he married again, then all was changed," she said.

Lucy had never before referred to her father's house, except in her delirium.

"They bring the tears to my eyes, but I do so love flowers."

"Was it your father's marriage that drove you from your home?" asked her nurse curiously.

"Yes, my father married a woman I disliked, though she was at one time a friend of ours."

"Was there anything else that caused you to take that step besides your father's marriage?"

The girl looked at her attentively for some minutes, and then she seemed to recollect herself, and replied, "Yes, there was something else, but I must not talk of that."

Mrs. Cartwright nodded her head, and changed the subject.

In the meantime Jack had Miss Severn's sitting room re-papered and hung with bright pictures. He procured a new couch to draw near to the fire, and various little knick-knacks to add to her comfort. His artistic eye taught him what would be pleasing to her. Lizzie and Annie assisted him in this business, and he felt as happy as a king when he thought of the surprise that would be in her eyes when she once more came down among them. The reader may now perceive that the scene has been brought back to the moment when the curtain was withdrawn on that evening when Jack brought his purchases to the door, and the children ran to meet him. Lucy's health was drunk in a bumper of champagne; but time presses, and the lagging sheep which have been left behind demand attention.

CHAPTER IX.

RETROSPECT.

It is a strange thing a man cannot be a cheat but he must give offence to every one. When I was an honest man my next-door neighbour hardly knew it; nobody then took care to proclaim it; but now I am a rogue the whole world must witness it.

SWIFT.

MRS. CAVENDISH was thoroughly dissatisfied with her life; it had turned out so different to what she expected; it was a palpable failure. She never loved the man to whom she had pledged herself. She was conscious that her husband saw through her devices, and was proportionately grieved at the consequences. She, on the contrary, felt neither humiliated nor distressed by this knowledge; her sorrow was for herself; she did not give him a thought. How to cut the tie without losing the advantages of the connection was the problem before her. In the midst of these reflections she was startled by a visit from her niece. She was sitting alone at breakfast when Clara entered the room.

"So you have gone and done it," said the girl in her slangy tone, after the preliminary greeting. This was in reference to her aunt's marriage. There was never much ceremony between them.

"Well, and what have you done?" asked her aunt carelessly, with a nod and a smile. There was none of the nervousness which had formerly characterised her tone when talking to her niece, for there was no fear of moral dynamite in the neighbourhood. Clara perceived this, and was a little taken aback. However, she determined to go a step further and see if this confidence would continue.

"I have had some success, and now have procured an engagement in one of the first theatres in town; that's what I have done."

"Are you any happier?" asked Mrs. Cavendish, with a palpable sneer.

"Why, yes, it is a better object, surely, than scheming for a husband," she answered, with that frank rudeness which only a woman could employ.

Mrs. Cavendish coloured. There was no mistaking this taunt.

"I was not speaking directly at you, but I am thinking of what two-thirds of my sex plot about night and day," she explained carelessly.

"Perhaps; still there is something substantial in the ambition, though it wants gas-light, music, and applause from the gallery," Mrs. Cavendish answered, with a smile of contempt.

"Oh, a matrimonial success gets its applause too, without the accessories. I congratulate you, my dear aunt. Are you satisfied yourself?"

"Have you come here to insult me?" she asked, stung by the last remark, the tone conveying more than the words.

"Certainly not, I called to see you. To be frank, I thought your altered circumstances would cause your heart to overflow with generosity, and that you would help me out of a difficulty. Travelling is so expensive, and I have been extravagant. In a word, two hundred pounds would be an immediate relief."

"Two hundred pounds!" exclaimed Mrs.

Cavendish in astonishment. "'Pon my life that is cool. Two hundred pounds indeed," and she laughed.

Clara saw now that her aunt was determined to ignore the influence she had previously exercised over her, and for a moment felt perplexed.

"You don't intend to give it, then?"

"Most certainly not. I think, Clara, your harvest-time has gone by," and she got up and touched the bell.

Clara sat transfixed. She held a trump card in her hand, but she was afraid to play it lest she might lose. She wanted money; her previous statement was true. She had depended upon getting it from her aunt, believing her own influence to be as strong as ever.

"I am sorry if I appear rude, but I must leave, as I have some shopping to do. Perhaps you have not taken breakfast; shall I order up some?"

Clara declined this hospitality, saying, "If you will allow me I will drink something instead."

"Do, please; you will find some wine on the sideboard."

Clara rose, poured out half a tumbler of brandy and drank it off. Mrs. Cavendish stared, but said nothing.

"I'll just write a letter," Clara said, seeing the other about to leave the room.

"You will find everything on the writing-desk, and if twenty pounds will be of any immediate assistance I can oblige you so far," and she took, as she spoke, a Bank of England note from her purse.

Clara took the money in silence. Then her aunt left the room with a lofty assumption of dignity, which entirely puzzled her visitor.

The girl stood still till she heard the wheels of the carriage roll from the door; then she rang the bell.

"Give this card to your master, and say I am here," she said to the servant who answered. The man bowed and disappeared. Clara drank more brandy, which brought a colour to her face. When the man returned he said, "Will you please to come this way, my master will see you."

She followed him with a firm step, as he led the way to the study, closing the door softly when they had entered.

"Thomas, get a seat for Miss Hartman. Excuse me, I cannot rise to receive you, for I have lost the use of my limbs."

The servant did as directed, and then left the room.

At first Clara started when she saw the broken, dejected appearance of the man who was once so hale and hearty. She took the seat indicated, and drew aside her veil. It is not necessary to repeat the conversation which took place, as the result will appear presently. It was exactly an hour and ten minutes after when she left, carrying with her a cheque for £500, together with the note her aunt left her, so the trump card was played.

* * * * *

In the suburb of Hackney there lived a man who was not popular with his neighbours, not that he was vicious or notoriously dishonest, quite the reverse. He bore the

reputation of being strictly honourable, even religious in his way, but he was cold, unsympathetic, and seldom known to smile. It used to be quoted against him that William Hewson once rebuked a man for laughing, telling him that there was nothing in life to create such merriment, and that it was only fools who laughed. He married the daughter of a Wesleyan preacher, a clever, worldly woman; they were not happy, neither were they miserable—they were six of one and half-a-dozen of another. Hewson failed at everything he put his hand to, and only kept the wolf from the door by an effort which he kept entirely to himself. He had two daughters; he always regretted that he had not a son instead. The girls knew they were not loved. Both were exceedingly good-looking, though of different types. During childhood they often suffered hunger; they saw little company; in their home everything was pinched and the strictest rules were laid down for their conduct. The only amusement they had was the teas and free concerts given by the meeting-house sect of

which their father was an attached member. The sisters were unlike in appearance, but there were two traits common to both—ambition and the love of finery. Maria, the eldest, in her eighteenth year, attracted the attention of an officer of the line at Woolwich, as she was walking through the narrow streets of that dirty little town. He dogged her steps into the steamboat, sat beside her all the way up to London Bridge, talked to her, and gave her his card at parting. Shortly after he called on her mother and obtained permission to pay his addresses to the daughter. In a fortnight they were married. During the honeymoon he was recalled to his regiment, which was ordered to embark for the Mauritius. Lieutenant Nugent was a thorough scapegrace. He drank, gambled, and descended as low in the social scale as a soldier could do on a foreign station with impunity. There was some talk about his selling out, when the news came that he was dead. All the evil reports were then hushed, and considerable sympathy was aroused for his widow. The marriage had not been a happy

one; most of the fault was saddled upon the husband, but some said the wife contributed her share towards the matrimonial bankruptcy. There was a strange circumstance connected with his death. At the *post-mortem* examination arsenic was found in the stomach; how it got there was a question which could not be solved. Suspicion was directed against his wife. Varley, the staff surgeon, was intimate at the house. People said he knew more than he cared to tell. At the inquest it was proved that Mrs. Nugent had sent for the poison ten days before his death. The little girl who bought the arsenic was, however, absent, having been sent to Europe to be educated the week before the trial. The *Port Louis Chronicle* gave a full report of the transaction, and stated that Lieutenant Nugent was poisoned. Nothing, however, came of the inquest, but the widow was looked on with suspicion and dropped by society. Nugent left some property, which fell to his wife, as there were no children. Shortly after the widow left the island to see after her property in England; and no one

regretted her absence. The ugly story was soon forgotten.

Clara, the second daughter, was seven years younger than her sister. When only seventeen she was the admiration of the place. One evening, while in the Strand, she was standing before a shop window where some jewellery was displayed in the usual tempting fashion, when a man, plain in appearance but elegantly dressed, accosted her. He asked her, "Which do you fancy?" and she pointed to a diamond ring of a florid pattern. To her astonishment he entered the shop, and soon returning presented her with the jewel with his most graceful bow. An acquaintance sprang up between them, secretly encouraged by her mother; eventually she went off with him. Her father forbade her name ever to be mentioned. Three months later she returned, having quarrelled with her lover. Her father refused to admit her, but gradually his wife induced him to relent. He did so, but never opened his lips to the child who had dishonoured him. Clara was revengeful, and saddened by experience,

became desperate. One night her father was seized with a sudden illness, and the next day he was dead. Suspicion was turned towards his daughter. She confessed to the deed. When sent to prison it was found that she was *enceinte*. On trial she was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. The sentence was mercifully deferred until she was delivered of a female child. This precious legacy was given to her mother. The father of the child, Lord D'Eyncourt was away from home at the time. The grandmother reared the child till she was six years of age, then feeling her own end near at hand entrusted her to the care of a soldier's wife going out to the Mauritius, who took her out as her own child. She was committed to the keeping of Mrs. Nugent, who was in no wise grateful for the responsibility thrown on her. The little Clara was allowed to grow up as she might without care or love. There was a priest in the island who took a fancy to her, seeing that she was quick and ready to learn, and it was through his advice that she was sent to France and placed in a

convent, and, if the truth must be confessed, it was his money which defrayed her expenses.

One evening Mrs. Nugent surprised the old priest by a visit.

"I have been thinking over your advice, Father Lorenzo," she said, "and as there is a ship leaving for France the day after tomorrow I think I had better send the child. I think you said you could get her a free education? I have not much money, but here is five pounds, it will pay her passage. The girl has no claim on me beyond that of charity. You need not come to the door, Monsieur."

The old man had risen, in another moment he was left alone stroking his long beard thoughtfully.

When the child's presence was demanded as a witness at the inquest, the day after she had sailed, his face grew a shade more serious. He never went near the house of Mrs. Nugent after that. This, however, did not make him forget the child whom he had grown to love. He wrote a long letter to a brother priest at

home. This procured her a kindly welcome when she landed. Clara was quick, clever, and promising to be handsome ; besides this she was ambitious, a strange child borne for weeks under the heart of a woman waiting for death, whose young life was blasted with misfortune, chilled with despair, and maddened by the coldness of a parent's just resentment. What had the unknown future in store for the fruit of unlawful passion? Ought the child with such a frightful disadvantage ever to be allowed to take up its life in this crowded world? We are told that certain features and traits of character are inherited. Is it the same with mental and moral qualities. Ought justice, which assumes the responsibility of taking one life, not to be empowered to strangle the child's as well to save her from possible consequences? At seventeen she was made aware of her own history. The Earl of D'Eyncourt, to do him justice, tried by every means in his power to find out what had become of the child. How he stumbled on the clue was curious enough. One day, in the Louvre, he

fell into conversation with a priest whose manners and general intelligence interested him. The Earl asked the priest to dine with him. The story of the child leaked out by accident. Father Lorenzo took the precaution before leaving the Mauritius to find out the soldier's wife who brought her over. She confessed the whole story, which he wrote out, adding to it what took place on the island, including the suspicion concerning the murder of Lieutenant Nugent, all of this he put into the hands of the nobleman as a record of a strange career. The Earl found the statement corroborated by certain gossips living in Hackney. After that he claimed the child, making her an allowance, and paying for her support at the convent. When she was admitted as a boarder, Clara was permitted to have very much of her own way, a thing she was not at all slow to take advantage of. One of the strangest circumstances connected with her, was that her father himself disclosed to her the particulars of her birth, giving her the paper which he received from the priest, and answering all her inquiries

about her mother, which were few. This was the document which she put in Mr. Cavendish's hand, and for which he wrote her a cheque for £500, the sum she asked.

The clouds of ill-luck hung over the girl before she came into the world. The first use she made of her liberty was to make the acquaintance of Charley Foster, a ruined gambler, who had met with an accident among the mountains, and was brought to the inn in a bruised and maimed condition. The sisters from the convent were in attendance. Clara's curiosity was roused by the presence of a stranger in the village. Then comes the old, old story. Charley flattered her vanity, won her admiration rather than her heart—he had not much difficulty as the horizon was not thick with rivals. He told her stories of Paris and London till she grew tired of the primitive place and the good homely people who loved her; the books she had read, and the knowledge she had imbibed facilitated rather than retarded Foster's plans, and when he proposed to take her to London she consented. There she

soon found out his real character, and, though heaven knows it was black enough, she did not shrink from him. It was only when he got low in funds and proposed to hand her over to one of his companions that she fled from him in despair. That was a very bitter time in her life, and afterwards, whenever she thought of it, her cheeks grew pale and a terrible sinking of the heart came with it. Her last shilling gone, all her clothes pledged, no friend at hand, she wrote to her father, but got no reply; starvation stared her in the face. One whole night she spent in St. James' Park, hiding among the bushes, her heart palpitating with fright.

What wonder that she took the plunge into the river? She was too proud to beg, and by certain fantastic tricks of fortune, charity is so tied up with red tape that it is only smooth-tongued hypocrites who can get people to vouch for them that get any assistance. But she was not allowed to die. There was more to undergo. She did not thank the poor man who ventured his life to save her, and who brought her to the lodging-

house in the East instead of handing her over to the police. The evening after the attempt on her life Elston found her and provided her with the means of support. He admired her appearance and ability, and she, in return, grew to love him. The reader already knows how he cast her off. The intemperate habits she contracted as soon as she discovered that her love was rejected may have been indulged in to drown grief, and perhaps the excitement of her professional life added to this necessity. The reader is now in possession of the main facts of her life, and can wait for further development, knowing that the detective Nemesis is not far off.

CHAPTER X.

TREACHERY AND DESEETION.

Woe has come ; open the gate wide.

Russian Proverb.

A DREARY morning in February—the most dispiriting month of our English climate—found Miles Cavendish seated in his study. His eyes were cast down, he was thin and worn, and a tired look rested on his face ; a Scotch plaid scarf was thrown over his shoulders, for the weather was cold. One wasted hand supported his head as his eyes were turned towards the fire, his shoulders were high and projecting ; you saw before you the ruin of a strong man, and if you could look into his heart you would find the inward wreck correspond with the outward.

There were several papers lying loosely on the small table beside him, some of them looked like legal documents ; a large silver inkstand with a dish of pens stood in the centre ; a long blue document rested on his

knee. There was a breathless silence in the room, though he was not the only occupant. The fire was red, but lifeless, and no beam of sunlight came through the window, near which Elston stood trying to look out; a hard frost the night before had darkened the panes of glass, and the dull fog trailed through the air like soiled, tattered drapery.

The fire lacked the courage to crackle in the grate; it burned as if under the influence of a curse to avoid imparting any cheerfulness to the occupants who seemed moody and preoccupied.

Elston fidgeted with his hand, trying to suppress a yawn, and then a slight colour came into his cheeks, the result of some fugitive thought which flashed through his mind. Anyone who knew him would perceive that he was excited. When the old man coughed he started and looked at him in a curious, nervous way. Cavendish had his back towards him.

"I wish it was over," spoke the old man, for the first time breaking the awkward silence.

Elston looked at his watch absently without making any reply.

"What is the time?" asked Miles, turning his head.

Elston again took out his watch, he seemed to have forgotten that he had consulted it a moment before.

"It wants but ten minutes of twelve."

"The time is short, yet I feel it long; you know I fixed twelve for them to be here."

"Yes, the time is short now," mechanically repeated Elston, again turning to the window and breathing on the dull glass; there were no flies promenading about, and he could not help wondering at the void their absence created. Next he turned round and asked—

"Is everything ready?"

"Yes, everything."

Two or three more minutes melted into silence.

"You seem as nervous as myself, Dick," said Cavendish, rousing himself.

"I am, for I am thinking it will be too much for you; I wish you left the matter to the lawyer and myself."

"No, no!" exclaimed the old man, with a slight movement of the hand, "I must go through this; I have gone through a great deal in the past, it can't make much difference."

"But you were better able to bear it then than now," put in the young man, without moving his position.

"Do you know I was dreaming of Lena last night? I thought she came to me and Fred was with her," he said, changing the subject.

"She is dead or we should have found out something," replied Elston wearily, while a look of pain came into his eyes.

"No, I can't believe it, something tells me that she will turn up some day."

"A fancy."

"Perhaps so, but there is no proof that she is not alive."

Here a ring at the hall bell announced the lawyer. He presently came in rubbing his hands. He was a small man, accurately dressed, and would have passed for a gentleman had not his manner been too obsequious

and deferential; his eyes were also too alert, though he tried to look composed, his attempts were entirely unsuccessful.

Elston did not stir from the window, but acknowledged his presence with a stiff bow. Miles talked formally.

The rustle of a woman's dress was next heard approaching the door.

"Come in," responded Cavendish to a gentle tap from outside.

Mrs. Cavendish entered in a stiff silk dress which made a noise as she walked.

Elston advanced and placed a chair for her use without saying a word; she neither accepted nor appeared to notice this attention, but stood by the table cool and self-possessed.

The lawyer looked from one to the other, feeling that any display of cheerfulness would be out of place, proceeded to adjust his spectacles as a species of employment incapable of offending either party.

"Perhaps, gentlemen, you will do me the favour to retire to the next room for a few minutes while I shall explain something to

Mrs. Cavendish," said Miles in a firm voice.

Both gentlemen assented and withdrew. Elston looked at her as he closed the door behind him with the look of a physician who is about to try a feat of vivisection.

There she stood, in the same position, outwardly expressing no emotion, only her hands were clasped more tightly.

"Won't you be seated?" he asked, pointing to the chair.

"No," she hissed in a firm tone.

There was a short pause. The long blue document which Miles had taken up rustled in his fingers; it was the only sound which broke the silence.

"Will you oblige me by looking over this?" he said, handing it to her.

She took it, and running her eyes over it for a minute or two, handed it back without a word.

"Are you satisfied?" he enquired anxiously.

"Perfectly."

This was said with a short, abrupt nod of the head.

"If there is anything to amend I should like to meet your wishes."

It was a form of judicial separation wherein he pledged himself to pay her an annuity of £1,000 a year on condition that she never came near him again. This sum was to be paid her during her life time; there was no other condition attached.

She saw him turn towards the bell.

"One moment," she asked, perceiving this action and turning her face towards him.

He looked at her, letting his hand rest on the arm of his chair.

"Why this summary dealing; what have I done?"

"Is it necessary to go into the matter?" he asked imploringly.

"Absolutely necessary," she replied, facing him in her most determined manner.

"I don't wish to inflict unnecessary pain, I think you might spare me this," he murmured, shifting uneasily. The plaid had fallen from his shoulder, revealing the gaunt appearance of the human wreck. There was a tired, hunted look in his dull grey eyes.

"Thanks, but if I am able to bear it you ought. A confession is due to me."

"Well then, be it so. I have heard your history. Is that enough?"

"Has my niece been telling you?"

"Yes."

"And you believe all she has said of me?"

"She gave me proof."

"What proof had she to offer?"

"Her own life, written out by Father Lorenzo, amended by the Earl of D'Eyncourt, and a cutting from the *Port Louis Chronicle*," he said slowly as if the words were torn from him. He did not look at her as he spoke. If he had done he would have seen the red flush which mounted to her brows, followed by a ghastly pallor which made her grasp the chair at her side.

"Do you believe me to be a murderess?" she asked with desperate calmness, while her hard eyes were literally fastened on him with a glare like that of a serpent.

"Don't, I beg of you, put such a question; remember I am your husband, whatever you are," he entreated feebly.

"I insist," she said, without removing her gaze from his face, a glance he was conscious of.

There was grave sadness in his reply.

"Since you will have it, I believe you are."

A scornful, derisive laugh was the answer she made him.

"Shall I tell you what I think of you?" she said after a pause.

"If you like."

"I never cared for you; I always believed you were a fool. I now think you are an idiot. There, you may now ring for your minions," she said, in a low, sharp voice; then throwing back her head she resumed her attitude of haughty defiance.

The old man never uttered a word, but his hand shook as he touched the bell, and the ashy grey coldness of his face seemed to have communicated itself to his heart.

Elston perceived on entering the shock he had received.

The lawyer then read the document; the signatures were affixed, and the business was concluded in a few minutes.

Elston held the door open for Mrs. Caven-
dish as she passed out. There was a smile
of triumph on his lips as he made her a
mocking bow ; she coloured and bit her lip.

The old man closed his eyes wearily. It
was a painful day to him. The lawyer took
himself off without any unnecessary cere-
mony.

"I think I'll go to sleep for a while, Dick.
You had better take a turn out." This was
said as Elston replaced the plaid, which
had fallen from his shoulders.

"Perhaps you had better," he answered,
going to the window and looking out.
"There she goes !" he exclaimed, as a
carriage laden with luggage drove from the
door. "You are rid of a bad bargain ; let
me congratulate you."

Miles made no reply.

When Elston left the room the old man
did not go to sleep, he lay back in his chair,
weary and exhausted. The trying scene he
went through made him feel flaccid and help-
less ; he felt as if he had lived too long, for he
had trusted that the remnant of his life might

be brightened by association with the woman who now insulted and deserted him. The gloomy silence which filled the room was in harmony with his dejected spirits. Once more his active mind wandered back over the past, haunting the old scenes like a spirit; those days so busy and full of honest work and patient toil, how sweet they looked through the enchanting shadows of memory. His eyes were turned on the fire as it smouldered lazily in the grate, but they had become clairvoyant, and saw only what the distant years contained. The transition from this stage of feeling to that other of dreams, where the impalpable becomes the real, is but a step. He had crossed its boundaries and once again he was looking at his first wife, talking to her as of old, with the renewed acuteness of feeling which a long separation had caused. The theme was their child's happiness, she and her husband had taken a house near them. Fred was making a great career for himself at the law. Cavendish was helping him in getting a connection. How happy this thought made him. There

was no talk of Varley's inheritance, the days seemed full and busy with life, and hopes ran high. Then occurred some difference between the lovers, for days they were parted, the father noted with pain the pale cheeks of his child as she passed before him, never reproaching her husband; and no one daring to say a word against him in her presence. How her silent distress filled his heart with sorrow. What caused this quarrel he could not find out. At last one day came which filled him with joy, when both stood before him with arms entwined. It was Lena, her face lit up with smiles, who said—

“Papa, won't you forgive us? This shall be our last quarrel.”

The young man's face was pale, he looked aged, he seemed to wait for her to speak.

The old man woke up saying—

“To be sure, my boy, I forgive you.”

“You were dreaming,” said Elston, who had just then entered the room unperceived. Cavendish rubbed his eyes and stared round him; then he shivered and a violent cough shook his frame with the intensity of an evil

spirit which is permitted to seize its victim every now and then and shake the very sands of his existence in its clutch, after an interval of rest, giving colour to the fable that our lives are influenced by spirits, good and evil, who make human bodies the battle ground for their unequal combats.

“Dick, will you get Bethia’s Bible, and put it near me on the table. I must study that now. You will find it on the third shelf from the top, near the statue. I feel somehow as if my stay here won’t be long.”

Elston brought the book, and as he laid it beside him he glanced sorrowfully at the drooped figure, and felt that there was something prophetic in the words which he had just heard. He managed to say the correct words usual on such occasions, but felt they were a mockery. The old man continued, without heeding his remonstrance.

“I have settled my worldly affairs. When Lena returns she will come in for the bulk of my fortune. Dick, I have not forgotten all the care and attention you have shown me.

You have stood to me through all this unpleasant business. I have left you an independent income for life, with all my books and this house, if you care to keep it. If not, let it. It will fetch a good rent, but you won't need it. One thing I insist on, you must take a month's holiday now. Thomas will take care of me, and I will telegraph if I want you. You will find a cheque for £300 on the writing-desk"—he stopped, another fit of coughing had taken hold of him.

Elston threw down the book he held before his eyes, while he listened to the words which were spoken. This cold, hard man of the world could not check the tears that came to his eyes, or shake off the chill which forced them upwards and deprived him of speech.

"This day's work has been too much for you; I thought as much. Do try and rest; I am not ungrateful, but I won't attempt the impossible—that is to thank you."

It was with acute feelings of pain that Elston listened to this leave taking; they were old friends despite the disparity of

years, the young man's unusual gravity making up for the difference. The friendship was not much coloured with sentiment, still an undercurrent of feeling bound them close to each other. The confident allusion to Lena's return awoke an additional pang of sorrow in his breast, for he believed her to be dead, but though dead she was dear to him. He was a man with small capacity for loving, but what he possessed was strong and enduring. That memory remained to him a solitary, brilliant fact; like a strange, lone column on a dreary waste, it furnished his mind with an object in the scenery which was indispensable to the picture, and which never faded from his mind. The glamour which surrounded the spark remained, while the light itself was quenched when she disappeared and no trace of her could be discovered; if lost to him better she should never appear; the whole phalanx of woman-kind could not now kindle the feeblest flame in his bosom. It was in this light he regarded her.

For the first time for many days Mr.

Cavendish opened his wife's Bible, and he tried to find some comfort in its pages. As he did so he wondered at observations which he had listened to once mechanically; he found that the divine record dwelt deeply on the perversity of the human heart. The book, too, had belonged to her who had once more become dear to him; all day he kept it on his knee; there was a sense of protection in it because it was hers; by-and-bye some text that suited his own case turned up, and then he read on to find out about himself, and no man ever did that without making some solemn discoveries. The Book of Job was his favourite; there was something in the old patriarch's life which accorded with his own, and though the reading was melancholy, he was in sympathy with it, for he himself felt crushed and anxious to go. So the days passed, and Miles looked like an old oak blasted by the storm, and awaiting for another lightning flash to bring it to the earth.

* * * * *

It is not pleasant to paint the shadows of life, but there is no help for it. Ormsby's

plight was equally sad. There are certain conditions of life which admit no change except from bad to worse, and his was one of them. The down-hill journey is easy when the wheels are once set in motion, and the end of most lives is at best a shabby wind-up to a grand opening. We are all averse to looking at the end, till forced by circumstances to do so; perhaps there is some wisdom in this reluctance, for no one likes to see the grave of his hopes, the open sepulchre where his proud dreams are buried.

We find him seated at a table writing letters, a green shade on the lamp gives a subdued light in the apartment; it was late before he finished; a red setter lying on the hearth-rug kept her brown eyes fixed on him, in that pathetic way which only a dog, of all animals, can fully show.

"You are tired, Kate," he remarked, laying down the pen and turning towards her, "and so am I." The dog got up and rested her head on his knee, slowly wagging her tail; this action was intensely sympathetic. "I believe you are the only thing in the world

that is true to me," he said, patting her head. Then he lay back in his chair and thought of one who was true to him, and who left her home in consequence of his desertion; what must she have suffered before she took that step.

"I have murdered her," he thought, "and ruined my own life as well; this is what my money has done for me, and fools scheme and plot life-long for that miserable coin which creates more wants than it supplies. But why blame it? Why blame anything but my own folly?" he gave a little laugh which sounded harsh and strange in the silent room. "It came easy and it has gone easy," he thought, referring to Varley's legacy. "But it has carried away with it my love, my hopes, and my fortune; it is for these I mourn; how sweet it would be to work hard for her, to win something myself, and not to riot through another's leavings."

Then there came before his eyes a vision, the memory of which made his heart beat again, of that night in crowded Holborn, when the sweet, mirthful face shone in the

crowd. He thought of how he followed her and the strange adventure which brought round the acquaintance, and then followed a succession of pictures of what afterwards took place, as day after day she became more dear to him ; he put his hands to his eyes to shut out this vision, and he felt something rise to his throat as if he were choking, while a wild, hopeless yearning came over his heart that brought a chill to his veins ; then the thought that he had been swindled, duped and rejected, made him clench his hands, and a dizziness came over his brain as the scene in the church at D'Eyncourt came before him.

“ What madness must have taken hold of me ? ” he asked himself angrily. Then he got up and walked about the room with a dull sense of stupefaction, as if he had received a blow on the head.

A little after we parted with him, before Fred had fled from his creditors, he wandered abroad for some months, but could not shake off the weight of trouble which fell on him. Somehow the image of Lena never was absent

from his mind, it would seem as if some malignant fiend took a pleasure in tormenting him with her memory and racking his heart with remorse ; he tried to shake himself free from it, but this invisible influence was too strong for him. The thought of going to Monaco and ending it at once occurred to him, but he resisted this temptation as cowardly. Gambling had now lost its charms for him ; tired, worn and spent he returned to England. Now that he was back, he was afraid to show himself ; he kept within doors during the day and only went out at night to wander moodily in the great, homeless streets, where true solitude can alone be found ; he carried with him a dreary sense of solitude like a vulture gnawing his vitals.

He did not go near any of his late fashionable haunts, but he roamed through the east end and looked into the strange unlovely life of the English workman, that brilliant impostor of whom we hear so much. There, in his degraded, filthy home, he found virtue in ruins, honesty but a name ; and crimes black as hell practised without shame or remorse.

The lanes cursed with a brood of hedgers born of adultery and incest, herding together in troops, in which the ties of relationship were as completely lost as in a herd of cattle. The lodging-house keeper sending her girls on the streets to make her house more attractive to men; the old woman who returned from church with a loaf of bread to let her one room to pick-pockets as a sleeping apartment, going shares in the profits; the intelligent artizan who, in order to seduce women, allowed his banns to be put up in the church, grinning at the pious fraud he had indulged in; the Bible woman at the mission church supplementing her scant income by charging exorbitant rents from flash girls; it was then he woke up to the terrible irony of life and the bitter farce of existence.

He felt conscious that within him existed two beings hostile to each other, a struggle was going on between them; how the combat would end he knew not. As for business he would not think of it, the lawyers had charge of his affairs, when they consulted him as to any steps

which ought to be taken he passively assented; while they talked and explained his mind was absent. They urged him to remain abroad for a few years, and by that time he could recover himself. To this he consented, but now he was back again, disregarding their advice and acting like a lunatic.

At night he could not sleep, being tormented by dreams, so he strode about until he became physically worn out. At the grey of dawn he came in and threw himself on his face on the bed. He felt a strange singing in his ears, a soft voice perpetually repeating some casual words which had no reference to his condition—a fragment broken from some discourse. One night he sprang up and went to the glass, the face that met him made him stagger back as if he had received a sudden blow from some invisible hand. He thought his former better self had disappeared, and that the fiend who tormented him stood in his place. No wonder that he was frightened; for days he had not shaved. His eyes were sunk in his head, his

cheeks hollow, and there was a dull light in his eyes like that of a sullen, smouldering fire, or a mountain tarn when rain and black clouds make its depths murky and forbidding. He hid his face in his hands; his own thoughts frightened him, and he tried not to think. He now felt as if some power beneath the earth invisible, but invincible, had grasped the root of his life, and was pulling it slowly but steadily from him. A catastrophe was impending, and he knew it.

CHAPTER XI.

IN ISLINGTON.

I did hear you talk far above singing. After you were gone I grew acquainted with my heart and searched what stirred it so: alas, I found it love.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

DALTON felt a new pleasure in existence; he looked forward to his evenings at home with childish delight. Lucy had the rare knack of sympathy, and unconsciously she drew him on to confide in her without being actually aware that she was fanning a flame in his bosom which would blossom into a proposal. That came later; as to herself she never entertained a warmer feeling towards him than that of a trusted friend; it would be impossible to regard him in any colder light after the many proofs he had given her of his devotion, she had really no love to give—her heart was empty; perhaps this was why her manner was so cordial and her mind so unsuspecting.

We are very often apt to think that

in social arrangements, when we ourselves have no definite intentions, our neighbours are similarly disposed, while all the time we may be building up hopes and schemes in the hearts of others which cause life-long sorrow and bitter disappointment.

This was how it stood between them. Lucy was not a flirt, she never practised any of those arts for the purpose of enslaving men which some women delight in, to bring a man to her feet and see him flush and grow nervous from a glance of her eye or a movement of her hand, all this she felt would degrade her; nevertheless a practised flirt could not have acted more successfully to attain her object. Jack was her slave, her devoted worshipper, he would have freely given her his life to do with it what she thought fit. It must be remembered, too, that Lucy had no friends outside that little group, and that much of the reserve which is practised in society was dispensed with in Mrs. Cartwright's humble house. There is far more interchange of sentiment and feeling among the poor than in the class next above

them, and more enjoyment of each other's society without any entrenchment on propriety. The middle class in this country pay a heavy price for their exclusiveness, but as long as they persist in keeping themselves aloof from their neighbours they deserve the isolation they impose on themselves.

"I can't make you out Mr. Dalton," Lucy said one evening when they were together. Annie was sewing by the fire and throwing admiring glances at her mother's lodger. Lizzie was busy constructing a house for the cat who sat on the hearth rug blinking at the fire and totally unconscious of her hospitable intentions. A bright fire cast its cheerful reflections over the little room.

Lucy, clad in a plain black dress with white collar and cuffs, was seated in a low chair; her cheeks were unusually bright from the blaze of the fire, though she held a Japanese fan in her hand with which she toyed.

"How is that, Miss Severn? I did not know that there was anything mysterious about me," said Jack, raising himself on his

elbow. He was seated on the sofa watching the girl's face and shoulders, and wonderfully happy in this occupation.

"You are a journalist, an artist, and a barrister. How can you combine them all?"

Jack smiled.

"The fact is I am neither one nor the other. I do a little at each. I mean at art and politics; but I never got a brief, and I am afraid I never shall."

"Why not?" she asked, looking at him thoughtfully.

"Perhaps I have not been diligent enough—solicitors are jealous. There are several reasons."

"If I were a man I should devote myself sternly to law, and try to make a success," said the girl, looking in the fire. There was something of sadness in her expression.

"Well, perhaps you are right—success is a fine thing; but some people don't look at it in that light."

"And why have you not done so?" she asked, turning round on him with her soft, velvety eyes.

"I really can't say," he answered, somewhat confused. Then he added, "You see if a man can make money sufficient for his wants in a line that is congenial to himself, he does not care to put himself to laborious work merely to double or treble the money he receives. There must be a stronger motive somewhere behind, and some have not that motive."

"Perhaps so," she replied, wondering.

"I still retain my chambers," he added, meaning to convey that if the motive came he might make a fresh attempt. He watched her intently, thinking that she might utter some word of encouragement, but her head was turned away, and she seemed to be thinking of something else.

It is only fair that the reader should be informed of the use Jack made of these chambers, which he more than once referred to, and not without pride. The fact of possessing chambers in the Temple was the small thread which bound him to orthodox respectable life; and Jack really took pride in being a barrister, though it never brought him any

substantial recompense. This was a foible, but who is there who has not some crotchet on which he sets a fancy value ?

The Chambers consisted of three rooms, two large ones and one which was little better than a closet. The small one he let as a sleeping apartment, subject to the right of having the door open into the larger room, or else the lodger might have been stifled as there was no chimney, and the window was not made to open. One of the large rooms was let for the same purpose. This also was subject to a condition giving the right of access to a cabinet containing papers ; besides this, two gentlemen had purchased the right of having a chair each in this large room between the hours of eleven and twelve in the forenoon to write their letters ; each paid an annual sum for this privilege.

The gentlemen who purchased the right of entering the room to write their letters and use the drawer of the cabinet, neglected to stipulate that their names should be written on the door. As landlord Dalton required an annual sum of £10 each for

this privilege, which they declined to pay. The tenants exhibited their annoyance by exercising the right of entrance without consulting the landlord's convenience in a way which became embarrassing. He further provoked their indignation by letting to gentlemen the door, for the purpose of address, at an annual charge of £5, though he demanded £10 from each of the lodgers, they being already booked. The door, from top to bottom, was soon filled. The gentlemen who had their names on the door had the right of having their letters addressed to the place; for this he employed a boy, whose duty was to place the letters on a table in the room and hand them to the owners when they called. He arranged that it would be a breach of covenant on their part to cross the threshold; consequently, great scandal was caused by the number of the callers on the stairs who employed the interval of waiting by indulgence in unseemly merriment. There was a clause providing against this misdemeanour which laid down that any gentleman detected in the act should have his name forthwith

scratched from the door, forfeiting the payment which he had made in advance.

One room he reserved exclusively for himself. The two gentlemen who occupied the others claimed the services of the boy. One of the lodgers sent the boy to fetch him his lunch; the other tenant, who was on bad terms with his fellow-lodger owing to his insisting on his door being kept open during the night, objected to this action, stating that the agreement did not extend to sending the boy into the street. His lodger racked his brains to find objections, and finally came to the conclusion that eating lunch in rooms and sending out the boy did not come under the head of "business purposes," and was for insisting that the lunch should be eaten on the stairs. Nothing pleased Dalton more than the constant litigation which was going on between these two. When he had perfected this scheme he considered it a masterpiece of legal knowledge. It was the only piece of legal strategy he ever committed.

Mrs. Cartwright still harped on the old string—the virtues of Mr. Dalton.

"A good husband he will make, that's what I am thinking, and all he wants is a wife to keep him straight. Don't you think so, Miss Severn?"

Lucy assented in an indifferent manner. She was accustomed to hear the good woman talk while her mind ran on other matters.

"I got five pounds for that picture, Mrs. Cartwright? What do you say to that? Mr. Dalton got it for me."

"Is it that little bit of a sketch you finished yesterday?" asked the woman, looking up.

"Yes; it will be lithographed, and probably twenty thousand copies sold for a shilling a-piece. They can afford to give me that much," said the girl in explanation, while a pleased look came into her eyes.

"And it was Mr. Dalton got it for you?" resumed Mrs. Cartwright.

"Yes; I don't know what I should have done without him," the girl said innocently.

"Well, and that's just what I have been thinking too; what could you do without him? See what trouble he has taken in get-

ting you the pupils, and now you have as much work as you can do. They talk of saints, but it is my belief that not one of them is as good as he is," she said emphatically.

Lucy smiled.

"Well, I wish he was settled. And do you know, he worships the ground you walk on."

"Oh, Mrs. Cartwright, do you want to make a match between us?"

"Wouldn't it be a good thing too if you were 'settled,' with someone to take care of you?"

Her theory of life as regarded her sex was that they ought to be "settled." She considered that a young lady was safe when she was settled—viz., married, after which nobody need trouble their heads further about her.

"I have not any notion of changing my condition," said Lucy, unmoved by this reasoning.

The thought pained her.

"Now why do you say that, my dear? Would you lose a good chance if it came in your way?"

"People must love before they marry. I have no love to give any man," she said, and the tears came into her eyes.

"Ah, God help us, that's a young girl all over, as if love did not come at the proper time."

Mrs. Cartwright, like many other women who have had a hard battle with the world, and who have fought most of it alone, had come to the conclusion that love was a childish affair. She, from her present standpoint, looked on matrimony as an inevitable partnership between the sexes, those being safest of their future who went into the business without any enthusiastic belief in the profits.

"What you want is a man who will be kind to you, and has the sense to be able to make his way in the world."

Lucy did not forget what her landlady said, and it caused her some pain once or twice when she noticed that Dalton infused into his manner more warmth than Platonic friendship would justify. Lucy was not dull; she was pre-occupied. This conversation, however, had the effect of revealing the true

state of affairs. She had not intended to lead the young man on to love her, but his kindly attention was grateful. Kindness always gains on a woman, and a Platonic friendship between two young people of the opposite sex is simply an impossibility. It generally terminates either in love or hatred. Now she kept asking herself whether she had unintentionally encouraged him. The answer was unsatisfactory. In future she determined to be more circumspect. Good resolutions are proverbially difficult to maintain when everything conspires to upset them. A sigh escaped her as she thought of this, and a momentary blush rose to her brow which it would be hardly fair to endeavour to analyse.

That same evening Jack came in. He looked very bright. One always looks well when one has anything cheerful to communicate.

"I have brought an order for a box at the Piccadilly Theatre. What do you say to that, Annie? I think there will be room for Lizzie too, only it is a pity that child does not care for theatres."

While he said this his eyes wandered towards Lucy.

"Oh, Jack, I love the theatre," exclaimed the child, springing out to meet him.

"Is this notice too short, Miss Severn? You have two hours to dress," he asked, putting the question with some hesitation.

"I don't feel inclined to go," she answered with an inward struggle.

This was the time to begin the freezing influence which was to keep this young man at a distance.

"Oh, you don't surely mean it, Miss Severn," remarked Annie. "Only last night you were saying it was so long since you had seen a play. I do hope you will come."

Jack's face fell. All the cheerfulness seemed to have died out.

"And look how sorry Jack is," pleaded Lizzie with embarrassing frankness.

If there was any tender point in consideration it was Lizzie who always discovered it. Neither of the parties referred to seemed to relish special attention being called to them.

"Surely the girls can go without me," was the response she gave.

"I shall feel sorry if you cannot come," he said simply.

Presently Mrs. Cartwright entered. Lucy's decision was communicated hurriedly by the girls. Jack stood silently pulling at his glove, and waiting anxiously for her influence on the situation, but making no comment.

"Nonsense, Miss Severn. Why not go and enjoy yourself?" said Mrs. Cartwright in her off-hand manner.

"There is a new actress from America to appear; all the papers have spoken well of her," put in Jack by way of encouragement.

"What is the piece, Mr. Dalton?" inquired his landlady, the only one present who seemed calm and at ease.

The girls were in a feverish state of excitement; Lucy knew this. There was no disguise on their faces. She did not look at Jack, but the quietness of his movements, for he had hardly stirred from the same place, told her that he was disappointed.

"*Romeo and Juliet*," he answered briefly.

"Why not go yourself, Mrs. Cartwright?" asked Lucy, speaking slowly, and not daring to turn her eyes towards where Dalton was standing.

"Oh, my dear, that is out of the question. My cough has been rather troublesome; I must take a little more care of myself; night air hardly suits me. You had better go and dress; I'll have tea for you when you come down."

There was always a certain amount of decision in her tone which brought obedience with it; it seemed to convey the impression, "What I say is the right thing; do it; don't be silly." Lucy yielded. Jack's "Do, Miss Severn," had nothing to do with gaining this assent, and, strange to say, he felt it, and experienced a pang of regret at the little influence he seemed to have acquired over this girl, whose lightest word could bend him as a reed shaken before the wind. This active faculty of perception is a decided addition to our misery.

Jack went out and drove back in a cab fifteen minutes before the time, and when

Lucy appeared, dressed and ready, he quite forgot the momentary irritation which made his heart tremble.

Jack wanted to sit outside, that he might not incommode them. Lucy would not listen to this; there was room for him within. The young man interpreted this civility as a motion in his favour. Nothing but Lizzie's sharp voice was heard as they rattled over the hard pavement, past the brilliantly lit shops and the surging crowd.

They arrived in good time; the curtain went up as they took their seats. Lucy insisted on the girls taking the front seats, and Jack thought she seemed to shrink back, as if wishing to escape observation. He saw a few critics in the stalls, and nodded to them. He wished they could get a sight of his companion, for he felt her presence would do him honour, but this gratification was denied him.

Lucy started as soon as "Juliet" appeared; she recognised Clara Hartman. In the hand-bill she had assumed another name. As soon as the first act was over Jack begged to be

excused, as he wanted to go out. The habit of retiring between the acts was a custom he could not break himself of; at one time (when he wrote his dramatic criticisms) it had been an absolute necessity. He used to tell Lucy that the first time he fulfilled this office he knew nothing of the drama; the subject of his articles was picked up at the bar while drinking and listening to the remarks of the old play-goers.

When he got back to his seat he had several shreds of gossip to communicate.

"How do you like her?" he asked.

"It is too soon to form an opinion," she remarked.

"Yes. We must see her in the balcony scene; there her powers will be brought out. She has produced a decidedly good impression so far, notwithstanding some observations on her character which look ugly, I allow."

"What do they say?" she asked eagerly. She was interested in this woman, who reminded her of days gone by.

"Well, they say she drinks hard, but it may not be true."

"Who is the gentleman who is looking up at you?" asked Lizzie, putting her hand on Jack's sleeve.

Lucy involuntarily looked down and then as hastily drew back, the colour left her face as she did so.

Jack leaned over and muttered the word "Elston" between his teeth.

"Who is he, Jack?" she demanded.

"A stranger to you, Lizzie."

Lucy hardly breathed. A feeling of alarm crept over her lest he might come up. "Had he recognised her, would he try to see her?" she thought.

"What a large circle of friends you have," she said, merely for the purpose of talking.

"Once we used to see a great deal of each other," was the answer he made, referring to the gentleman in the stalls.

Lucy did not put any more questions, her enjoyment of the piece was marred by this incident.

Jack saw that she was getting tired, so they did not wait for the conclusion; they then adjourned for supper in one of those convenient places at hand; the children were

in ecstasy at the novelty. Lucy, too, enjoyed the treat, and laughed at some of Jack's reminiscences of days when he haunted theatres, rushing off to some dark room in a newspaper office, with the gas half on, and there penning a glowing or a damnatory account of the piece he had just witnessed, his teeth chattering with the cold, and longing to get his work over that he might join a few other convivial spirits at a tavern over a smoking tumbler of punch, "and that was not the worst part of the performance," he would add with a laugh; "what fun and frolic we used to have to be sure."

Lucy listened to this with delight, for his power of throwing an interest over the most commonplace circumstances was a spell which affected everyone; besides, items of information relating to public deeds have a peculiar interest for some which it is impossible to account for.

The fear of meeting Elston at first alarmed her; she thought every moment she should see him enter the box, and then all concealment would be at an end. Then the thought of her father rose before her, how was

he? Once she walked past the house at night; it seemed dark and gloomy, there was no light in the drawing-room, the stillness alarmed her; she almost stumbled against someone approaching while her eyes were fixed on the house, the gentleman apologised, and then, after walking a little, looked back, she thought he was someone who might recognise her; it made her heart beat, so she hastened her steps. That was the last time, she did not intend to go again, and yet the memory of her mother and the proud, happy days she had spent under that roof, together with some conversation with Fred, came back to her heart with a hungry rush as of long pent up waters escaping over their accustomed bed.

This was what brought the tears to her eyes as they were fixed mechanically on the stage, and which Jack attributed to other emotions. As for him he enjoyed that night more than any in his life, because she was with him, and her presence was light and music and warmth to his soul.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE BRIDGE.

It is only the disagreeable present conditions a man desires to quit, he does not deny the will to live. This may consequently continue after his death and cause him to take shape again in some more unpleasant form.

SCHOPENHAUER.

LUCY had grown nervous and anxious—why? She expected Jack to declare himself, and she was afraid of the pain a refusal would inflict on one so delicate in his addresses and so devoted in his attentions. There was also another emotion at work under the surface, which she hardly took into account—the thought that she might drive from her side the only male friend she possessed in the world. Perhaps Mrs. Cartwright's prudential advice was beginning to operate; constant dripping will wear a stone, and if perpetual mention of Dalton's good qualities could subdue and captivate the heart of any woman, such discourse was not wanting; but women do not fall in love by this method, though they may, however, be led into it.

She frequently pictured to herself what he would say to her, and then she tried to think how she would put him off in the gentlest manner, so that they might again renew their former relations without the restraint she felt at present. She became even impatient to get it over. I am bound to say that reflection did her no good in the matter. Why are people always urging on us the painful and troublesome duty of weighing over every matter as if there was not a whole host of situations in life where this process occasions nothing but embarrassment, and little or no satisfaction. Can we educate the heart, or smother its voice when it would speak, or save ourselves from a thousand annoyances which hourly beset us, and which no forethought or preparation can ward off from us? Better had she left it alone.

Here is how it came. Lucy had a habit of sitting in the twilight near the window, resting her head on her hands; her work for the day was over and this period of inactivity was a reward she felt she deserved; her mind then travelled back into the past, she

was with her mother again, she listened to her lover's voice, and with the eyes of her soul she saw sights and heard sounds which were sweet to her. When the lamp was lit and the children came in, the beautiful vision vanished, and she took up the threads of her life which had been temporarily dropped while she entered this enchanted region. The family soon found out this habit of their lodger's, and, with a rare delicacy, they never intruded during these intervals.

One evening she was interrupted in this occupation, not rudely ; she did not hear any one enter the room till she looked up and saw Dalton standing by her side.

"I am certain you know what brought me here," he said without any preface, subsiding into the seat before her to which she pointed, —and stranger still—without any embarrassment.

"I see tears in your eyes," he said, looking into her face. The street lamp shone in the window, the room was half in darkness.

"I have been thinking, and I have expected you," she said softly but sadly.

“You have been thinking of me!” he exclaimed, his eyes lighting up with pleasure, and his heart throbbed with a sensation of joy which was as new to him as a scientific discovery. She did not correct the mistake, but let it pass; she feared to pain him at the moment. “If you have been thinking of me, why those tears?” he asked, taking one of her hands in both his. She did not resist, but for a moment she continued silent.

A chill came over him but he shook it off, her silence seemed interminable.

“You are going to ask me a question?” she said evading his enquiry. She turned her eyes towards him, they were wet with tears, but something in their depths made him feel sick at heart, he half released the fingers which he held in his, but presently resumed courage.

“I came to ask you to be my wife,” he said looking at her earnestly. There was a hearty ring in his voice and a triumphant tone in the words which implied that he was making a courageous speech, and one for which he had thoroughly prepared himself.

"I knew it," she answered, a little frightened.

"Yes, Lucy, your woman's heart has told you that I love you, and I"—He stopped for a moment as if he was afraid to finish the sentence. "Well, I want to know whether you can give me any love in return?"

The fixed look she gave him made him feel cold, for the language of the eye is to that of the tongue as the electric current to the old mail coach.

"I have none in return—at least none of the love you would or ought to require," she explained.

He sat silent with his eyes cast down, still holding her hand in his.

She could hardly hear his breathing. He did not seem surprised; of what was he thinking?

"How can you tell what quantity of love a man seeks for?" he said with a voice full of earnestness, turning to her abruptly.

"Because my love has been sought and given before I saw you," she answered.

He turned away his head, it was as if a

sharp instrument touched his finger nails; but this involuntary wince did not make him release the hand which he still held.

"I have guessed as much, but I thought it was all over."

"Yes, it is all over," she said sadly.

His eyes brightened, but in deference to her tone he looked down to conceal the pleasure this gave him.

"I can be satisfied with a little as my own heart is full; Lucy, you don't know how much I love you, nor how impatiently I have waited for the time to declare it. I could not wait any longer, it has filled my heart, and I felt that I must speak out or the feeling would kill me. This is not a boy's love, made up of whim and sentiment; I am nearly double your age, but I tell you the emotions you have roused in me are stronger than I can master. Love never came near me before; at one time I could not have believed it would, but now I know it is true. You can never know how much you have been in my thoughts, entering into the best of my life, bringing it to the surface and banishing

the evil like the Spirit of God. I know now what the children mean when they say 'God is Love,' for I feel it in your presence, and it must be the same feeling that weak mortals experience before a perfect Spirit. Like a beautiful summer dream you stole into my heart, and there, as its queen, you are seated in honour; you have my loyal and true allegiance. At first I confess I tried to tear your image from my mind, for I felt that a passion like mine was too strong for this life, but to no purpose. I could not regain my freedom, and now I rejoice in it and bless the "— He stopped suddenly.

"What is the matter?" he asked sorrowfully; he saw she was weeping bitterly; his words, which came fluently and as strong as a mighty current from a deep reservoir, had swept her like a feather on its surface. He in his excitement had been unconscious of the effect of his words.

The colour came and went in her cheeks; her hand trembled in his. She looked lovely with her eyes cast down and her bosom heaving gently.

"Have I distressed you?"

"You have made me think of days that are past." She said no more, but withdrew her hand. He heaved a sigh, and his cheeks grew pale.

"Can I ever make you think of other days than those—of happier days to come? Will the day ever come when the privilege of protecting you may be mine—when you will be the pride and joy of my life?"

She turned away her head, but he saw that her eyes were wet with tears.

"Listen!" she said, summoning courage. "I should have spoken before; I must now."

He folded his hands and waited.

"I love another; something has parted us. I love him still, but he is dead to me. What can I do?"

"Take time, and tell me to hope that when his image is dead in your heart mine shall take his place; only, don't drive me away without the hope."

"Can such love as yours accept so little—be satisfied with such a trifle?" she asked, wondering.

“Ah! Lucy, love is a mystery; mine to me is the greatest I ever knew. I think I could wait for yours till the last note of the archangel’s trumpet, if I knew that then you could put your hand in mine and say—I am yours.”

She made no reply to those words, but the look of tenderness which came into her eyes went straight to his soul like a warm beam of heaven’s sunlight. Then she added, “I can believe it.”

He lifted her hand to his lips and then stood up. “I want nothing more,” he said triumphantly, and with one fond look at the bowed figure of the beautiful girl, he left her. On entering his own room he felt indisposed to settle to any given pursuit; all he could do was to recall the image of the woman he loved with all the intensity of his nature. That look of trust which she gave him was as inspiring as the words of a great general to his soldiers before entering the battle—they supported and sustained him, and he felt that the victory was won. He took his hat and walked out into the streets.

His mind was in a ferment; he wanted to get cooled down, for this state appeared to him unnatural and extravagant. He discovered that he was laughing to himself without any assignable reason; he would fain skip instead of walk; and when he saw a street Arab fling a Catherine-wheel, he laughed immoderately and gave the boy a sixpence, asking him to do it again. I think if he had been in a quiet place he would have been tempted to try one himself.

Then he sought the Park, where he might talk aloud, which in his present overcrowded state of mind would be some small relief to his feelings. He walked till he got to Apsley House, whistling a tune to himself in a hilarious state of mind which only Toole or Terry could depict. Crossing the drive, he made for the apex of the triangle, where the chairs are piled. The long walk before him was quite deserted; the night was hard and cold, and the ground under his feet felt like black granite as he performed a series of skips. This pace he kept up for some time, covering the ground with the rapidity of a

bicycle. At last he came full tilt against a policeman, who slipped out from beneath the shelter of a tree.

"Stop, young 'un," stammered the constable, driven back by the concussion.

"Oh! Bobby, I beg your pardon!" laughed Jack, enjoying his surprise.

"This is a dodge," thought the astute official, eyeing him sternly. "You aint up to any good, that I know: blowed if he aint been and robbed someone," he thought.

Jack laughed immoderately.

"'Tis a cold night; here is something to lift the cockles off your heart. There is a pub. round the corner."

The man pocketed the coin, and his countenance and his suspicions underwent a decided change. Jack was off before he was able to express his thanks, as he was slow of speech. He was not sorry for this. Then he slowly resumed his beat, indulging in a policeman's reverie.

How bright the stars appeared in the distant heavens looking down, where all was black around. The waters of the Serpentine mir-

rored them back. Jack gave a loud shout to discover whether his voice would carry to the end of the lake. Then, as he listened to the sound he made, he began to think that this proceeding was rather childish.

"Well, I feel like one possessed. Does every fellow who falls in love feel like this, I wonder?" he uttered aloud. He had no one to talk to, but he supplied himself with company by addressing himself. Perhaps it is not a bad plan, were it not a trifle tiresome. Then he repeated the name Lucy aloud to himself in different tones, with a mental commentary like a foot-note, and he did not find this occupation monotonous. Then he thought of counting his paces up to the boat-house, but this he relinquished at the seventy-fifth step, for the name Lucy was sweeter than the numerals, and the woman Lucy was nearly tripping him as she came into his thoughts.

At last he drew up before a seat and lit a cigar. He saw the figure of a man slowly issuing from between the trees; all his movements were the reverse of his own.

One glance at the bowed head and dejected walk taught him that here was sorrow as great and as deep as his joy was fervent and boisterous. He could not help following him with his eyes. The scene around was perfectly still. There seemed to be life up among the bright merry stars, but down below everything was wrapped in shadow; the waters looked chill and repelling, and you felt that the light which scintillated on its surface was deception.

Jack watched the man approach the parapet, and fold his arms on it, then rest his head on his hands. For five minutes he maintained that position. It brought a distinct feeling of misery to Jack's mind, to imagine anyone so desolate; soundless movements produce effects at times more sad than if definite words accompany them. Dalton's seat lay under a tree, so he could see without being observed. It occurred to him that the man was remaining there too long; the chill of the stone will go through him, he thought. Perhaps the cold seat which he occupied himself helped him to this sugges-

tion. He thought of going and arousing him, but something kept him back from doing so; it would be a rude interference with a man's liberty. It might have been curiosity to know what would follow. Dalton remained rooted to his seat, though he felt the cold communicating itself to his body. At last the man lifted his head and then looked over the water. Now then, thought Jack, his curiosity kindled. The man then drew back, took from his pocket a long handkerchief; it looked black, but it might have been red. He then proceeded to fasten one end firmly round his wrist, putting a running knot on the other.

Jack's astonishment increased. The stranger having satisfied himself that the fastening was strong, let his hand drop to his side, his head droop on his chest; then he gave one last look at the stars as if he was wishing them good-bye, and slowly approached the parapet.

Then Jack crept from his place and came softly behind him. He heard him mutter to himself as if he was explaining his conduct.

"One can't take away human life. The animal life is all we can take away, and very often the best thing a poor creature can do is to put himself out of the world, saying I am unable to get on here; Lord, I render back to you the life you gave me; judge it if you will, or set me to work again somewhere else; give me a fresh chance, I have spoilt this one." As he uttered this he leaped on the parapet, twisting the handkerchief round his second hand; but before he gave the fatal leap he was held back by an unseen hand, which prevented this act of self-destruction.

"The logic may be fine, but I call it suicide, and that is a cowardly thing, whatever way you name it," said Lalton, when he had drawn him back.

Both men for the first time looked into each other's face. The stranger shuddered, but said nothing.

"By heavens, it is Ormsby," exclaimed Jack with astonishment, wringing the other's hand as if it was the handle of a pump. "Why, don't you know me, man? Have

you forgotten Dalton? Oh, he is crazed. Well, well, who would believe it. Fred, man alive, what has come over you? Don't you know me? Ah! good God, has it come to this at last!"

Jack put his arm in his and led him from the place. The other did not resist, though he remained silent.

Fred stopped and looked as if he intended to make resistance, when Jack led him to the side of the cab which he had hailed.

"In you go; egad I'll not leave you now, my boy, whatever you do." Without further resistance he entered, and they were both driven to the Temple. Jack made a roaring fire, and then mixed a tumbler of hot punch, and stood by till he saw it swallowed. Fred remained passive in his hands, and Jack did not bother him with questions. He was, however, shocked with the appearance of the young man—with his unshaven face, hollow cheeks, and the weary, tired look in his eyes. The medicine he prescribed was, in his opinion, better than anything the faculty could suggest. "I never knew it to fail in

my case; he will be as right as a trivet in the morning." These were Dalton's reflections as he sat all night by his friend's bed, for he could not think of leaving him, and in his present state of mind this act of Samaritanism was not a discipline, but a piece of agreeable duty, after the favours that fortune had heaped on him.

There is a vague instinct of gratitude even in the worst of us. When the world goes well with us we like to do something to help the miserable. Avoid the man who is destitute of this instinct, he is not worth the clothes he stands upright in. The wonder is that God ever sent him here, but be sure he will never be sent higher.

Jack never closed his eyes that night. No school girl ever built more castles in the air than he did while looking into the fire and occasionally turning his head to see that his friend was comfortable. The thought of Lucy gave him a sense of importance. He was now somebody, there was one who would think about him, who would smile when she

heard his step, and be anxious to know where he was and what he was doing.

It was late next day when Fred opened his eyes and looked round him. At first he could not make out his surroundings, the room was strange to him. He saw a man sitting near the fire with his head resting on his hand. The luxury of Jack's thoughts enabled him to remain for hours in this position thinking of his great happiness, and building castles in the air from every window of which Lucy's fair face looked down and smiled on him.

"Is that you, Dalton?" asked Fred in a hollow voice.

"The same, God be praised to hear you talk. I didn't know what had come to you," exclaimed Jack, springing up and approaching the bed. "Tell me, do you feel better?"

"I don't know. How did I get here?" asked Fred, still bewildered and staring at his friend in a helpless, mournful way.

"I brought you, but you mustn't talk about that yet awhile. Are you hungry?"

"I think I could eat something," said Fred

slowly, trying to recall the circumstances of the past.

“Good; you wait a minute, I’ll be back in a jiffy,” said Jack, leaving the room. Soon the frying of a chop was heard in the little pantry, a place so small that there was hardly room for two dogs to dance in it, but still large enough for Jack’s modest wants.

Fred tried in vain to remember what had taken place. He remembered leaving his rooms and wandering in the Park, then the handkerchief tied round his wrist recalled the whole scene of that night when he had made up his mind to make away with his life. He sighed, and closed his eyes as he turned on the pillow.

“Now you must sit up while I put the pillow at your back. There, that is better,” and Jack set the tray before him.

“Go on now and eat, I’ll hold your glass. Not a word till you have done, then perhaps I will surprise you with a story about myself,” and there was a twinkle of merriment under Dalton’s white eye-lashes which made Fred smile for the first time.

"One glass more, 'tis capital port. I got it at Short's, they keep it good there. No, you must take it. Now, don't you find yourself better?" asked Jack, seeing with delight that he finished the chop.

"Yes, decidedly," answered Fred, brightening a little.

"There, Richard is himself," said Jack cheerily, removing the tray.

"Now do you think you would be equal to a pipe," asked Dalton, standing in the middle of the floor holding his head a little on one side and regarding him with some uncertainty. "It's a mighty consoling thing to me when ever I get rubbed up against the grain."

"I think I'll try a cigar."

"Very good, there are some in the box," he said, going to a little cupboard and producing a handful. "I'll stick to the clay. You are sure your head is all right? No stars swimming before your eyes, or—?" and here Jack made a pantomime with his hands which made Fred laugh.

"Did you think I had the D.T.?" he tried to say.

"Come, damn it. I am glad to hear you laugh, whatever you had," said Jack, lighting his pipe after holding the piece of flaming paper at the end of Fred's cigar.

"Now, here is my story. Faith, I am dying to tell someone, and you are the one man in the world I'd like to know it first."

Fred listened to his friend's story and smiled at his ardour.

"You deserve a good wife, Dalton, for you are sure to make a good husband."

"But was it not a wonder my meeting her as I did?" asked Jack, after he had finished his narrative.

"Yes, one meets the right person when least expected, and we miss them in the same way," he replied seriously.

"I hope I shan't lose her, anyhow," commented Jack, knocking the ashes out of his pipe. "At least if I do it won't be my fault. I don't think there is another girl in the world like Lucy. I can't show you her likeness, but here is a lock of her hair. I got it after she had that illness. I once knew an old man who was in love with a girl. One day he brought me out to a damp summer-

house and showed me a lock of her hair. The tears were in his eyes as he did so. I used to laugh at that afterwards, but now I know what he felt. The best of the joke was he wore it—you never would guess where."

"Next to his heart," put in Fred, without smiling.

"No; in his hat."

Ormsby laughed, while he held the golden tress in his hand.

"Jack, do you remember my telling you how I fell in love? It is some years ago."

"To be sure I do. You had a flower in water on your table which she had given you when I found you. I have not forgotten it."

"Yes, that was the time."

Fred pressed his hand over his forehead with a sigh.

"If it is not unpleasant to you, Fred, I'd like to know how that ended. I remember your making a curious remark about it at the time."

"What was that?" said Fred starting, he had forgotten the circumstance.

"Well, you said if she failed you you should never find happiness."

Ormsby remained silent for a minute or two, and Jack puffed away contentedly.

"They were the truest words I ever said," Fred at last murmured in a broken voice.

"Is that true?" said Jack, taking the pipe from his mouth and looking at his friend with interest.

"Jack, if you knew all you would have let me remain in the Serpentine. I deserve no better, for I have lost that girl by my own misconduct. I deserted her. We were to have been married; the death of her mother caused the marriage to be postponed. I then came in for that fortune and was going into Parliament. I thought she looked coldly on my ambition, and I was annoyed; a coolness sprang up between us. Then I used to go into society, and mixed with a great number of fashionable people. I met there a handsome, heartless beauty. I was not in love with her, I was simply infatuated. I proposed, after she and her wretched old father led me on to believe she would take

me, but she rejected me when she found I was not as rich as she expected. I have gone to the dogs ever since, and last night I thought to finish the business."

"And what became of the girl?" asked Jack with interest.

"She disappeared; I never could find out. It was only then I discovered that I loved only her. Ah, Jack, I hope you may be more fortunate than I have been," and he gave a deep sigh which went to Jack's heart.

"That was a bad business, Fred; you must try and forget it."

"I never can forget, it is that which is killing me. The heart is taken out of my life. It is only when the cards are in my hands that I forget her."

A deep silence followed this confession. The fall of a coal on the hearth was the only sound which broke the stillness of the room.

"I tell you what, Fred, you must come up and see Lucy. I'll get her to sing for you; women are the best consolers. You know I am sorry for you, but hang me if I can find anything to say."

Fred shook his head.

"I should be a kill-joy. No, my friend, enjoy her society, get married, and some time I will look in on your happiness. I intend, now that you have preserved my life, to devote it to some useful purpose. I think a long sea voyage will do me good, and then whatever health I recover will be given to helping others."

There was a solemnity in Fred's words which impressed his hearer. Jack got up and pressed his hand, and then, as he turned from the bed, dashed a tear from his eye which did not dishonour his manhood. He could not trust himself to speak.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

A good store of resignation is a most necessary provision for the journey of life. It first must be abstracted from disappointed hopes, and the sooner the better for the rest of the journey.

SPINOZA.

THE joy of Mrs. Cartwright's life was realised; she saw that Lucy had taken an interest in Jack, that she trusted him. There are few secrets among women. Lucy told her of Jack's proposal and how she had received him. And the good woman went over and kissed her and pressed her to her honest breast in a warm embrace, which was her most active way of showing her approval. Lucy was not so enthusiastic herself; she was trying to school herself into loving—the liking already existed—but the love did not follow so quickly.

“I told him I had no love to give,” she explained, “but that I trusted him, and in

time I might be able to give him my heart, as he has now my respect and admiration."

"Mark my words—the love will come. You acted wisely, my dear, and I am so glad of it."

Here Mrs. Cartwright shed a few tears, which, in the nature of affairs, could not be resisted. Lucy wept, too, but it was not over a present joy, it was for a vanished hope.

There was a great deal more said on this matter which can't be put on paper. This is a subject which women do not dismiss lightly. There was hardly a "pro" or "con." which was not introduced. Mrs. Cartwright had confidence and encouragement to offer for every misgiving the young girl put forward; and if there were tears, there were also smiles and laughter. The children were not admitted to this secret, but their curiosity was roused; there were a great many playful allusions which made Lucy's face blush; and when Jack came in that evening he had a touch of his old bashfulness, but never did he appear in better spirits.

When Lucy and himself were alone he came and sat by her.

"I have some news for you," he said, twisting a bit of paper in his hand.

"First tell me why you were out all night," she asked. "We were uneasy about you."

"Were you really," he said, while his face was lit up with a joy he could not conceal.

"Of course I was, and so was Mrs. Cartwright. You don't stay at the newspaper office all night?"

She blushed as she said this, and he noticed this little token—silent as it was, it filled his heart.

"I was thinking of you, too, and that was company in itself, such sweet thoughts. Lucy, the world was all commonplace to me before you came; now it has become beautiful, it seems to me like a scene in a pantomime—all light, and flowers, and sunshine."

Lucy smiled and held down her head; she was praying inwardly that she could respond to his words, but her lips were dumb.

"But you have not asked to hear my

news?" he resumed, changing the subject, and thus releasing her from the thoughts which oppressed her.

"Do tell me," she said, looking up.

Fortunately Jack was so immersed in his own happiness that he did not seek for any response from her save her presence.

"I stumbled on an old friend, one I have not seen for years; things went wrong with him. As I was passing through the Park I was just in time to save him from being drowned.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "How did it occur?"

"This way. He was tired of life and wanted to do away with himself; these are the very words he used, 'Lord, I am unable to get on here, I render back to you the life you have given me. Judge me if you will, or set me to work somewhere else. Give me a fresh chance; I have spoilt this one.'"

"And then he jumped in," added the girl excitedly, while her cheeks grew pale.

"No, I did not let him. He was about to do so. I brought him to my rooms instead.

I did not think it safe to leave him—that's what kept me out."

"You were quite right. Is he sorry for his rashness now?"

"I can't say he is; but as soon as he gets stronger he told me he would go out to the Colonies and try to help the poor there, and in this way forget his unhappiness."

"That is the noblest thing to do," she remarked, impressed with this strange story.

"Well, it is better than the other; for the worst thing a man can do is to make a corpse of himself."

"It must have been a great sorrow that drove him to that. I suppose he did not tell you his reason?"

"Yes, he lost the woman he loved through his own fault, and he thought he could not live without her; but Lucy, let us talk of something brighter. This story has made you pale."

"I am deeply interested in it," she answered gravely. "How did he say he had lost her?"

"Well, he deserted her through some cold-

ness on her part; she did not sympathise with his ambition, then he got infatuated with someone else who jilted him. I think that is what he told me. I asked him to come up here to hear you sing, and rouse him a bit. You don't mind my doing so, Lucy?" he said timidly.

"Certainly; any friend of yours will be welcome. I'll do all I can; I pity him already."

"That's a darling," he said, kissing her hand. "At first he refused, till I begged him to come and see you."

"You told him about me?" she said, casting down her eyes.

"Yes, I told him I was on my trial, but that I had no fear of failure."

Then the subject was changed.

Mrs. Cartwright soon after entered, and the conversation became general.

About five o'clock in the evening of the following day a knock came to Mrs. Cartwright's door. Annie ran to open it.

"Is it here Mr. Dalton lives?" inquired a tall stranger whom Annie did not recognise.

“It is here; but he is not in now. Perhaps you will walk in; he will be home shortly.”

Fred—for it was no other—took off his hat and walked into the little sitting-room, the door of which the child opened to him.

On the hearth rug he stood and looked around him; there was a lamp lighted on the table, for it was one of those dull, dark days in that season when the heavy atmosphere of London makes an artificial night before the real one begins. How bright and cheerful the rooms looked with its pictures and pretty ornaments. Fred saw the reflection of his sad face in the mirror over the fire, and turned away with a sigh. Just then the door opened and he heard a light step approach.

Good God! did his senses deceive him? Was it a dream, or what? He stood rooted to the spot.

“Lena!” he cried, opening his arms to the woman in the black dress with sweet pale face and shining hair. She uttered a cry of delight, and next moment was sobbing on his breast, while her heart beat wildly. More than a minute elapsed before either could utter a

word. "Lena, my own darling, alive and well. God's name be praised," he uttered solemnly, lifting her head so that he could look into her face.

"My own Fred," she answered, clinging to him as if something threatened to part them.

Then they grew silent from excessive joy, the bodily contact alone sufficing. After a moment he asked—

"Where is Lucy Severn?"

"I am known here by that name," she answered, smiling and looking up into his face, and now noticing the ravages that time had executed on that once joyful countenance. Then she grew afraid.

"Oh, my God!" was all he could utter, and he staggered as if an invisible hand struck him.

She led him to the sofa, and they both sat down.

"What will Dalton say?" he muttered through his clenched teeth.

Lena did not at the moment understand the cause of his emotion, she was too happy at the discovery of her lover, but it all

flashed on him, and he felt his soul torn as by a mighty influence.

"Lena, you seem not to understand!" he cried, looking at her with a frightened expression in his eyes.

"I understand that we have met, and that we shall never part again. Is it not so?" she asked, while her wet eyes shone radiant like stars on a frosty night.

"But you have given your love to another—one more deserving than I—one who loves you with all his soul?"

"Never; I loved no one but you, Fred," she said, lifting her sweet face to his.

He stooped down and kissed her, while a cold shudder crept over him, then he passed his hand over his forehead as if to remove some difficulties from his mind.

"Lena, I love you—I loved you always—and it was only when I lost you I knew the priceless value of your love; but now I am a wreck, a broken, ruined man. Can I take you from the man who adores you? who saved my wretched life in order to ruin his own? I don't deserve this."

"Are you the man Jack saved?" she asked, turning very pale, and her heart growing chill.

"Yes, Lena, I am that unhappy man."

She looked down, and a fearful struggle went on in her heart.

"Choose, Lena, and may God direct the choice."

"I have chosen," she replied, slipping her hand in his. "Jack is generous—he will forgive us."

Fred's face lit up; from that moment he was an altered man; the time flew on rapidly, they had so much to say to each other—that neither felt it. At last the door was opened, and Mrs. Cartwright entered; there was an expression on her face Lena had never seen there before—grief and wounded sorrow. Who does not know that look?

"This is Mr. Ormsby the man I was engaged to," said Lena, introducing him. "And Fred, this is the best friend I have had in my desolation."

Fred approached the woman, who recoiled from him. He had his hand extended, but

something in her act prevented him from speaking.

Mrs. Cartwright sat down on a chair, and, lifting her apron to her eyes, burst out crying.

Perhaps no words that a human being could have uttered smote Lena more acutely than this involuntary burst of sorrow. She saw it all—no words of defence or explanation came to her lips—the faculty of speech seemed to have deserted her, she only grasped her lover's hand more tightly.

"Has Mr. Dalton come? I am expecting him," he asked gently, breaking the painful silence.

"Oh, have you not seen him," sobbed Mrs. Cartwright, as if her heart would break.

Fred was terribly moved.

"He went away half an hour ago with such a look on his face. He told me not to disturb you, that you had a great deal to say to each other; I could not wait any longer. Oh, the look that was on his face, shall I ever forget it?" she cried bitterly.

"Did he say anything?" asked Fred, while Lena felt his hand tremble in hers.

“ ‘I am not wanted any more,’ that’s what he said,” and the woman bent down her head and the tears fell quickly from her eyes.

Had not Fred led the girl to the sofa, she felt she must have fallen to the ground.

Fred beckoned Mrs. Cartwright to the window, and then in a low voice entered into a brief explanation; his voice and manner were so gentle that she listened to him, though the tears still rolled down her cheeks silently as she thought of the man whose life was broken, and who had fled from her house in sorrow; she even assented to what Ormsby proposed in a dejected, mechanical way. As for Lena, she hid her face in the cushion of the sofa and wept bitterly.

When Mrs. Cartwright left the room Fred went and touched her on the shoulder.

“ We will go to your father now, darling; it will gladden his heart to see you.”

She arose at once; while they were driving to the place in silence with hearts beating in expectation, I must return to Jack, who had made the discovery which so distressed his landlady.

Never was he in better spirits at coming

home than that evening, all the way through the streets he was humming to himself a strain of the popular song Nancy Lee, and thinking of the cozy fire awaiting him at home, and the bright smiles, and the merry laugh of Lucy, the pride of his heart. He let himself in with his latch-key, passing by the sitting-room he opened the door gently to see what was going on. What did he behold? A scene which made the blood fly back from his cheek and lips. There, in the attitude of Millais' "Black Brunswicker," stood Lucy and the friend whose life he had saved, looking up into his face with love and affection, and he looking down on hers with tenderness. For a minute he was too paralysed to move, he stood there like a figure turned into stone; but in that minute he heard enough to blast all his hopes. He learned then that Lucy and Lena were one and the same, and from her own lips that she never had loved another; he waited to hear no more, but softly closed the door behind him and then sought his own room, where he flung himself into a chair and gazed idly all round him;

then he took off his hat and laid it on the floor, he thought that its weight was compressing his brain; next he opened his neckcloth, and tried to breathe more freely. He drew out his handkerchief and put it to his lips, a shiver ran through his limbs as if some subtle poison had touched his blood; in his brain there was a vague astonishment; a crowding upon his mind of curious thoughts which puzzled and confused him. A vacant smile played around his lips, and stupid, meaningless words came to his tongue which had no reference to anyone. His brain reeled as from a sudden concussion, then he groped his way to the bed, for either there was insufficient light or he seemed blind, he did not know which; he flung himself on his face, and for one hour he remained in that position. Then he sprang up, went to the head of the stairs to listen, returned and filled himself a glass of water which he hastily drank off. He went downstairs softly, met the landlady in the passage.

“Don’t disturb them,” he said, pointing to the room, “they have a great deal to say to

each other." She noticed his face was very pale, then he returned to his room, hastily crammed a few things into his bag, and left the house unobserved. "After all it was only a dream, a beautiful dream which could not last, and now I am awake in the cold, chill world that was so bright only an hour ago." He looked up and down, not knowing where he was going, and then plunged forward into the lonely streets of London, where the human waifs float like the spars of wrecks after a storm. He felt as distracted and homeless as the wind. Then he looked back on his love, as the traveller in the desert thinks of the mirage of water which led him on, and then mysteriously disappeared when he thought he could touch it with his lips.

* * * * *

The meeting between Lena and her father was touching, he kissed her and wept. There was no difficulty in getting his forgiveness.

"I drove you to it, my dear, but let us not talk of that. Where is Fred?"

"Here, sir!" exclaimed the young man,

who stood looking out of the window while this scene was being enacted.

“Well, give me your hand. You have suffered, I have suffered, we have all suffered. In this Book on my knee, I read that suffering is the lot of humanity, but it points to a time when sorrow will be no more, and when God will wipe away all tears from our eyes.”

Fred grasped the hand given to him in undying friendship, nothing ever came between them after that.

And what of Mr. Brandon? Of course he married them and had the first kiss, and Fred and his young bride spent their honeymoon in the West, as they once planned while boating on the Thames. Lena was delighted with the scenery, the people, and her husband, who was the most devoted of men.

“You were my ideal from the first,” she once playfully said, slipping her arm through his; at the time they were looking at a sunset from one of the mountain passes in Connemara. The young man grew suddenly silent, and a shade came over his brow.

"Don't Lena," he exclaimed; then, after heaving a sigh, he added, "For the navigation of this life nothing is so dangerous as an ideal. Forget it. I have proved myself a man of many faults, a broken ideal, but with God's help"—here he took off his hat, and then, looking into her eyes—"with yours too, I hope to profit by my failures."

There was something solemn in this assurance, and when you saw his grave, handsome face you felt that the change and suffering had improved him. Perhaps the pledge was ratified above.

Lena made no reply, but bent her head. Was she convinced? No. What woman ever was?

* * * * *

Perhaps I am expected to make an edifying conclusion to this story by rewarding virtue and punishing vice. Nothing of the sort. I am bound, as a strictly veracious historian, to say what exactly took place.

Mrs. Cavendish is fairly happy, though of her history I have little to add. A friend

saw her in Paris last year, in bravest attire, talking to a Russian Prince, and looking as youthful and smiling as usual. She gets the best of life from her point of view, and forms one of that group of women who haunt watering places, dress magnificently, and create a sensation by having an unknown history.

Elston never took a wife ; he speaks slightly of marriage, and lives mostly at his clubs, taking a tepid interest in the welfare of his species and a warm one in his dinner, the most exciting subject left him.

Clara Hartman became a great success. Her *cartes* were sold in every shop window from Belfast to the Bosphorus. Society has constructed her history in its usual sweet and kindly manner. The author declines to offer his remarks amidst the babel of confusing historians. Early this spring the public was shocked by the news of her death—which took place at an hotel in Paris, where she went for a week's change and rest—particularly because it revealed a phase of French customs hitherto unknown. Miss Hartman's body was

sent to the Morgue, and afterwards quietly buried in the little French village where Father Lorenzo sent her when a child. She rests now beneath the daisies where she once played before life's fitful fever carried her out into the unknown.

But what of Jack? Very little. After a month or two's wandering, no one ever knew where, he came back to his old landlady, dropped into his old ways, and was much the same man whom I introduced at the beginning, only the old vivacity was gone, but perhaps this was owing to years, and a severe illness through which Mrs. Cartwright successfully nursed him. Lena's acquaintance did him good, for he never went back to his old drinking habits; it was even whispered that he put by some money, and ill-natured gossips said that that was the reason why his landlady took such care of him, but the reader knows better. There is one incident in his life which it is better to state before closing his history. He wrote a letter to Fred, with an inclosure to Lena, wishing them happiness, and asking both their consent

to keep the tress of hair which once belonged to her, so that he might carry it to the grave as a memento of his love. He never could be induced to visit them, and begged as the greatest favour that they would not renew their invitation. To the latter a reluctant consent was given, and the tears that blotted the writing told him that he was still in her memory.

THE END.









